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THE PHILOSOPHY OF MASONS.

IN

SEVERAL EPISTLES

From EGYPT,

TO

A NOBLEMAN.

by Thomas Marryat, M.D.

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DEDICATION

TO

The FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

Meſſieurs,

NEVER was any object viewed with ſuch tranſport by the enlightened eye: Never did a ſociety of men with more juſtice claim it.

LIBERTY, originating from you, as a central point, will, with gradual and irreſiſtable progreſs, ſpread to the

whole circumference of the habitable globe.

To you the human race are indebted for their knowledge of the *natural* rights of man. You have torn up deſpotiſm (that baleful monſter) by the roots. You have exantlated and confirmed truths, hitherto ſuppreſſed by artifice, or cruſhed beneath the weight of ill got power. Such as, The *natural* equality of men,—That every man has a right to think as he pleaſes;—To ſpeak, or write what he thinks freely. This is indeed the nobleſt and deareſt privilege of man. Thus

will

will all falſſhood be ſoon detected and expoſed: Juſt reaſoning and concluſive arguments ever prevail and lead men by the only proper means, to the diſcovery and acknowledgment of truth.

This is impoſſible where any religion is *eſtabliſhed.*

YOUR haughty neighbours, who boaſt ſo much of their liberty, preſent an humiliating proof of the truth of this propoſition. A tenth part of their good citizens are diſqualified from ſerving

their

their country, becauſe too conſcientious to embrace an eſtabliſhed religion.

A poor old ſchoolmaſter, ſome few years ago, for writing an inoffenſive pamphlet, intitled, "The hiſtory of "the man after god's own heart," was proſecuted by eccleſiaſtical power and ſuffered (proh pudor!) in London, a puniſhment inflicted on the vileſt delinquents and abandoned catamites.

LEARN wiſdom from the folly of Britain.

WILL YOU *eſtabliſh* a religion which Charlemagne propagated by fire and ſword?

IN

In whatever country a religion is eſtabliſhed, the miſeries of mankind are continually accumulating.

The only religion that NATURE teaches, is — That every man ſhould enjoy all the pleaſure he can and communicate as much as is in his power to others.

Read the enſuing epiſtles and THINK.

I am,
With great eſteem,
Your ſincere admirer,
And humble ſervant,
The EDITOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

BY what means the ſubſequent letters came to my hands, to offer an account at preſent would ſignifie little: The courteous reader would believe juſt as much, or as little as he pleaſed of the matter. When the remainder are obtained, with the invaluable treatiſe of chemiſtry, mentioned in the ſeventh epiſtle, the curioſity of the public ſhall be fully gratified.

Though the author wrote, volante calamo, it has not been thought proper to make the leaſt alteration in the phraſeo-

logy

logy that the genuineneſs of the letters might not be affected. I ſhall only add, that (about eleven years after the date of the laſt letter) he was ſhip-wrecked on his return, by which he loſt an immenſe property, and that which he much more regretted, all his papers; among which were the letters of his amiable and noble correſpondent.

The EDITOR.

THE

PHILOSOPHY of MASONS,

In ſeveral Epiſtles from Egypt, to a Nobleman.

EPISTLE the SECOND. *

My Lord,

Cairo, October 24, 1750.

YOUR anſwer to mine ſtruck me at firſt reading with equal ſurpriſe and chagrin, I knew your Lordſhip too well to think you capable of ſuch

* The *firſt* is irrecoverably loſt.

meaneſs, as to aſſume any ſuperiority from your rank, titles, or property. From what paſſed between us for ſo many years, at ſchool and colledge, I knew it to be impoſſible: You never claimed, but ſpurned at any advantage that did not originate in intellectual merit. Forgive the injuſtice of the inſtantaneous ſurmiſe. It was indeed tranſient; tho' your cavalier treatment of me was as netteling as it was humiliating.

" Could I find no better employ-
" ment for my time and money
" than to aſcertain the heighth of the
" largeſt

" largeſt pyramid with more preciſion " than had ever yet been manifeſted?" To be ſure, an error in a few yards is a matter of no great importance. I have curioſity, my Lord, tho' it ſeems, I muſt keep the gratification of it to myſelf. " You would hear nothing " from *me* that other travellers have " noticed. If they deceive, it is not deſignedly and *ſlight* errors in matters of ſo little conſequence are not worth agitating." If like Procruſtes, you thus ſnip off all ſuperfluities, my letters will be neither very prolix nor mighty numerous.

How mortified was I, at firſt bluſh, by the following paragraph. "Let "me hear nothing of your adventures, "or even of your hair-breadth eſcapes. "You have ſenſe enough to keep out "of harm's way. If from a concate- "nation of untoward circumſtances you "are brought into a ſituation truly "dangerous, I know you are not de- "ficient in preſence of mind or ſelf- "poſſeſſion: You have wit enough to "contrive and courage enough to exe- "cute an extemporaneous plan for your "extrication. If that is impoſſible, you "and I have learned to ſubmit to the "law of neceſſity." I am more obliged

to your Lordſhip for your high opinion of my mental abilities, than for your expreſſions of a tender and enthuſiaſtic affection. To ſay the truth; the *ſang froid* werewith your Lordſhip treats every incident that relates to ſo reſpectable a perſonage as myſelf, has almoſt incapacitated me from ever mentioning ſaid perſonage any more. You are ſatisfied that I ſhall make myſelf as happy as I can be, that it is not in the power of fate to prevent my enjoying every moment of exiſtenſe. To communicate theſe matters by the pen can ſpring only from *Vanity*, you therefore deſire to hear

nothing more about them. Very well my Lord! Now ſuffer me to ſet you right, with regard to your opinion of me. Vanity is the moſt contemptible of all our ſenſations, of which there is not a ſingle ſpark in the compoſition of your humble ſervant. Pride is a paſſion as noble as innocent, and ſtrongly impreſſed by nature on the human heart. Of *this* indeed he challenges as much for his ſhare as would bear competition with his black Highneſs. Theſe, tho' ſo widely different are often confounded as ſynonimous. Vanity conſiſts in the deſire that others ſhould think us poſſeſſed of qualities

lities to which we have no title. Pride excites that pleaſurable tumidity, which a man feels from pluming himſelf on thoſe ſuperior excellencies of which he knows he *is* poſſeſſed.—The vain man's being is in the opinion of others. The proud man cares not a button what others think of *him*. Swift juſtly diſcriminated theſe, when he ſaid he was too *proud* to be *vain*.

As your Lordſhip has informed me that you have no deſire to know anything at all about me; after having precluded all the uſual topics of which letters are compoſed, it is a great mercy

mercy that you let me know how far the liberty of *my* pen may extend and not degenerate into licentiouſneſs. To furniſh you with *materials for thinking*. *New* and *uſeful* knowledge of things, or of man and manners is not contraband. As gentle a taſk as impoſed on the Jews, during their reſidence *here*. To be ſure, I am in a fine country for accumulating ſuch *materials* as your Lordſhip requeſts. I belive the whole Delta will ſcarce produce a native *man*, who ought with propriety to take the wall of a baboon. As I ſhall purſue my courſe to penetrate as far as poſſible, into the interior

rior parts of Africa, if your Lordſhip has any taſte for the natural hiſtory of monkies, I doubt not of my abilities to ſatisfy you. *Materials for thinking* truly! In ſober ſadneſs, I wonder at the extravagance of your demand. When we made the tour of Europe together, did we find among the moſt enlightened and beſt informed men, much novelty, or what was worthy of employing the thoughts of a philoſopher? Having beat over the ſame ground with moſt of our contemporaries, can we expect that *many* things, which were worth it, have eluded our obſervation? In ſhort, my Lord, the plants

you

you ſeek and ſet me hunting after are mighty ſcantily ſown in Europe. The African negroes are, to be ſure, very pretty gentlemen to learn logic of. If a mummy—nay don't piſh. Will a fine piece of porphyry, with an immenſity of hieroglyphics engraved (demonſtrably) previous to the deluge.—Theſe, you will ſay, are *materials* for fooling away time, not for *thinking*. As matters are thus circumſtanced, I have very little hopes of obliging you by any thing that may occur in the progreſs of my journey. If I meet with a Cynocephalus or Pongo that can articulate, your Lordſhip ſhall

be

be acquainted with all the uſeful knowledge I may receive from him. As this is not a very probable caſe, it is time to put an end to your reading *this*, or perhaps any other production of your Lordſhip's ſincere friend.

T. M.

Epistle the Third.

My Lord, My Lord,

April 9, 1751.

ANHELOUS with ſurpriſe, almoſt intoxicated with joy, I know not how to communicate my ideas with the rapidity equal to their preſſure. Yes, my Lord, I can now furniſh you with *materials for thinking* as long as you live. To explore the method by which I acquired this invaluable treaſure, your Lordſhip muſt excuſe me, for introducing on the tapis,

tapis, once more, that reſpectable perſonage myſelf: otherwiſe it would be difficult to render my future letters intelligible.

KNOW then that walking on the banks of the Nile, about thirty Engliſh miles from Cario, one evening, I was really abſorbed in contemplation. One ſequacious Janizary attended me, an indiſpenſible adjunct to a ſtranger, who feels no particular inclination to have his brains knock'd out in theſe truly inhoſpitable regions. The beauty of the climate, it's amazing fertility, the ſerenity of the air, the brilliancy of the heavens,

views that charm the roving eye beyond all deſcription, gentle breathing perfumes that delight and even faſcinate the ſenſes; all conſpired to raiſe a full tide of bliſs in a heart overflowing with gratitude. Juſt as I was turning my thoughts on the amazing viciſſitude of the fate of it's inhabitants; that unnatural retrogradation from the moſt knowing to the moſt ignorant and brutiſh of all people: wrap'd in meditation on the fleeting ideas, totus in illis. Juſt ſliding into a reverie, a ſudden ſhriek of diſtreſs rouzed me from the roſy couch of thought and impelled to immediate action, Ob-

ſerving at a ſmall diſtance, one man attacked by five, I flew like lightning to his reſcue, my faithful Janizary, whether diſguſted at my temirity, or taking it for granted that I ſhould be cut to pieces before his arrival, advanced more ſlowly to my aſſiſtance than I had reaſon to expect. Before his arrival (as I had great advantage of the Egyptians by my knowledge of the uſe of the ſmall ſword) I had laid three of them dead at my feet, with no other preſent than a cut from a ſabre on the left ſide of my head. Muſtapha made ſure of another by ſuch a blow as manifeſted he was in good

good earneſt, for indeed it left him a moſt dreadful ſpectacle. The other fled with precipitation and Muſtapha very wiſely ran after him. The laſt was the gentleman to whom I was indebted for a ſolution of continuity in the ſkin of my head.

You are ſafe Sir ſaid I in broken Arabeſc, turning towards him (for my back had been as cloſe as I could place it to his breaſt, during the engagement) and I hope have received no injury? None Sir he replied but that very ſenſible one, the wound in your head. A little turpentine beat

up with the yolk of an egg will ſoon ſet that to right, as I learned from one of you Turks. I am not a Turk ſaid he. A Chriſtian then to be ſure! He ſmiled, but a cloud immediately darkened his countenance,—you bleed much. Why Sir, as the Iriſhman ſaid by his wife's fiſtula, it may be an *eye-ſore* as long as I live. You are a Frenchman, I preſume, addreſſing me in French. Deny me not the honor of attending me to my houſe; it is not two furlongs diſtant. I complied directly.

Observing him intently, I think I never ſaw ſo truly venerable and ſo expreſſive a countenance. With the pearl of gratitude gliſtening in his eye, the ſmile of complacency on his lips and a heart overflowing with the milk of humanity, he thus addreſſed me. You have Sir at the imminent riſk of your own, preſerved a life of very little importance, for which action, however meritorious, very ſcanty thanks are due to you. But your diſintereſted conduct, to which I was an admiring eye witneſs has inſpired me with enthuſiaſtic rapture. All I have is your's, and tho' my property

is

is by no means inconſiderable, were it infinitely more, I ſhould eſteem it an inconſiderable trifle as a reward of ſuch intrinſic merit. Pſhaw, ſaid I, I have done nothing more than I ought to do. By your *pſhaw* Sir replied he, in Engliſh, I fancy you are an Engliſhman.—I am not aſhamed of my country. I am an Engliſhman. Nor Sir will your country ever have any reaſon to be aſhamed of you. Now my Lord as you already well know what a clever fellow I am, I ſhall ſay nothing more of what paſſed between us 'till my arrival at the houſe of this——Jew. Yes my Lord don't ſtart, nor have

recourſe

recourſe to your ſnuff-box. I have far greater wonders in ſtore for you. At the houſe of this Jew I now am and in all probability ſhall there remain as long as I live.

To draw the character of this great and good man is far beyond my abilities. A few feint evaneſcent ſketches are all you muſt expect. He is the only ſon of an eminent Jew merchant, who reſided in Cairo, and traded to moſt parts of the habitable globe. He acquired an immenſe fortune, which for obvious reaſons he ſuffered no one to be privy to but his ſon.

Feeling

Feeling and lamenting the deficency of his own education, he determined to give his ſon as liberal a one as he was capable of obtaining. He was ſtrongly attached to learned men and received the higheſt pleaſure from liberal diſquiſitions and ſcientific reſearches. He felt the moſt exquiſite pain from his irreparable want of previous knowledge. Of the neceſſity of this he was truly ſenſible, and that he was frequently led into erroneous concluſions for want of that education which was irremediable. He therefore placed his ſon under the tuition of a learned Jewiſh Rabbi,

who

who taught him the dead and ſome living languages as paths to the temple of ſcience. He took infinite pains himſelf to imbue his young mind with the deepeſt tincture of the dignity, importance and divine origin of the Jewiſh religion. Thus prepared and equiped, young Phtharras (for that is my friend's name) at the age of fourteen, was ſent to Padua with the Rabbi for his mentor and governor. He was charged to conceal his religion and name. Here he ſtudied four years, keeping in practiſe all the ſeverities of his religion in private, with his coadjutor. From thence he proceeded

to

to Leyden, were he remained for two years. Young as he was, his thirſt after knowledge was inſatiable. He then repaired to Paris, where he ſpent another year. From thence he went to Oxford, was matriculated at Lincoln colledge, but paſſed the chief of his time in the Bodleian library. He is in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word a helluo librorum. Before the year was expired after his ſettlement *here*, his Jewiſh tutor died. Soon after this, he went to London, where he continued for three years. He was then called back by his father, who felt his own declenſion and died about

eighteen

eighteen months after his return. Soon after his deceaſe, he (partly from the neceſſity of buſineſs, to finiſh the merchantile tranſactions of his father, tho' principally for the inveſtigation of knowledge, and to mark the manners of men) travelled through the Eaſt, Turkey in Aſia, Hindoſtan and China. He alſo viſited Sumatra, Japan and ſeveral iſlands in the Southern Seas. In this improving tour he ſpent fifteen years. Then returning to his native City, he built this villa, with a view of dedicating the remainder of his life to contemplation and friendſhip. Here he has now reſided for twenty

three years, never ſo well pleaſed as when in converſe with a very old Egyptian philoſopher, who lives in a beautiful villa about half an Engliſh mile diſtant from his own.

His habitation is ſituated upon as fine a ſpot as any upon the ſurface of the globe. Without the appearance of pomp, which would be dangerous, or even of plenty; he is furniſhed within his own domain with all the neceſſaries and all the conveniences of life; I might add, with all it's deſirables and elegancies. He has a royal library, with every philoſophical,

mechanical,

mechanical, and mathematical Inſtrument; ſuch an apparatus as an European can form no idea of, of which more hereafter.

The natural abilities of this man are wonderful indeed. His genius piercing and exalted, not inferior to a Newton's. His taſte is truly exquiſite, particularly for claſſical learning, of which he is extremely fond. His critical acumen is nice and penetrating. He is alive to the ſlighteſt fault or blemiſh of an author. He ſees immediately and is ſtruck with the fine ſenſe of thoſe writers, which

is indiſcernible to the generality of learned men. Horace is his greateſt favorite. There are very few Engliſh writers to whom he is a ſtranger. For brilliancy of imagination, conciſeneſs of expreſſion, harmony of numbers and correctneſs, he ſays, no one is comparable to Pope. He has more humanity, more milkyneſs of human nature and finer feelings of the heart than any man I ever met with. An inſtance of diſintereſted benevolence will agitate his whole frame with inexpreſſible ſenſations. He feels a peculiar tenderneſs for the whole animal creation, and cannot ſuppreſs his uneaſineſs

eaſineſs at the ſight of a mouſe under the talons of Grimalkin.—I am called away in a little hurry and can therefore only add that, excepting the abſcence of pig-meat, there is no man feels fewer wants than your Lordſhip's ſincere friend,

T. M.

Epistle the Fourth.

My Lord,

April 17, 1751.

THE acceſs I have obtained to the invaluable treaſury of ſcience before alluded to, is entirely owing to an advantage which no other traveller has hitherto availed himſelf of, if it were in his power. I mean, that of being able to claim the honor of proving himſelf a free and accepted maſon. As your Lordſhip is a brother, I need ſcarcely hint the requeſt that my future communications may be

deſtroyed

deſtroyed, or at leaſt, carefully preſerved from falling into any other hands.

PHTHARRAS, ſhortly after our acquaintance, diſcovered my maſonic abilities, at which he expreſſed the moſt unbounded tranſports. Now ſays he we ſhall be able to hold a maſter's lodge; a privilege my friend and I have ſo ardently tho' in vain ſighed for theſe many years. My brother Cnephen will rejoice with me. Tho' a man of ſingular modeſty, he is I believe one of the beſt and greateſt philoſophers on the face of the globe.

With

With the ſtrongeſt natural abilities, he has ſpared no pains or expence to acquire all the learning of the antient Egyptians, from whom all the arts and ſciences took their beginning. He has diſcovered many which have been long loſt and are ſtill deemed irrecoverable by the reſt of mankind. He ſhall ſpeak for himſelf. We ſpend every evening alternately at each others houſe. He was a prieſt of Oſiris, but it is more than forty years ſince he has declined all prieſtly excerciſe. He is tenaciouſly attached to ſtudy, retirement and privacy. With a competent patrimony, he reſides

ſides at his elegant villa, about three furlongs diſtant from mine. He viſits no perſon but me; yet he is revered by all the neighbourhood. This is not my caſe, tho' I have taken all poſſible and perhaps too much pains to ingratiate myſelf into their favor.

CNEPHEN expreſſed as much joy as the Jew at meeting with a brother maſon tho' his joy was more temperate and chaſtiſed. As every maſon ſaid he muſt be a uſeful member of ſociety, what is your profeſſion? I told him, a phyſician, at which he ſeemed much pleaſed.

Now

Now my Lord your friend bids you farewell, as his future letters will contain nothing more than the ſubſtance of what paſſed in converſation with the two moſt extraordinary men in the known world. At our firſt aſſembling as a lodge, Cnephen was requeſted to give a lecture on the origin, nature and progreſs of maſonry, with the moſt important anecdotes relative to the ſociety. With this he readily complied and nearly to the beſt of my recollection in the following manner.

THE ſociety of maſons was firſt formed in Egypt, the mother and nurſe, of arts and ſciences, where they all originated. This ſeems no more than natural, for the probability is very great that Egypt was the firſt land which emerged from the ocean, and is conſequently the oldeſt country in the world. Moſes who was by no means friendly to the Egyptians, yet ingenuouſly acknowledges that they were the wiſeſt people on earth. From the earlieſt ages, the aſcent to which it is impoſſible to reach, as men diſcovered any art, or improved any ſcience; (in a ſtate of ſociety) they felt the

the neceſſity of communicating them for their own ſakes, that they might be ſupported and aſſiſted. To promote their lucrative views it was alſo neceſſary that ſuch communications ſhould be confined to as few in number as poſſible. It was unavoidably requiſite that every member of the ſociety ſhould be laid under the moſt ſolemn obligation to preſerve the various depoſits intruſted to him from all thoſe who were not intitled to ſimilar emoluments. As architecture was of the higheſt conſequence to mankind, with reſpect to utility, convenience and magnificence, the maſons were

the only perſons to be applied to on this account. No other perſons were capable of plannimg or erecting edifices adapted to uſefulneſs or ſplendor. It is remarkable that theſe philoſophers in every age and every nation diſtinguiſhed themſelves by the appellation which in all languages ſignifies *a maſon*. It is true that every fellow-craft, before he obtained the dignity of a maſter-maſon, muſt have made great proficiency in grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, muſic, and aſtronomy.

THE maſons had long confined all the ſciences within the limits of their own fraternity, 'till they admitted amongſt them the travelling Greek philoſophers, who viſited Egypt in ſearch of knowledge. They indeed were not very ſcrupulous in purſuing the means of obtaining ſcience by any ſacrifiſe; nor leſs nice or conſcientious in divulging thoſe ſecrets which were under the ſtrongeſt obligation imparted to them.

EUCLID firſt made public all he had learned of geometry: The higher part of the mathematics he had not

acquired. The application of this ſcience to the meaſurement of land, building and various other arts, was ſo obvious, that many ingenious Greeks availed themſelves of it to the no ſmall detriment of the maſons. This, as it was the firſt, was the ſevereſt blow our ſociety ever felt. Some of them to this day aſſert and ſeriouſly too, that the extraordinary death of this apoſtate was a judgment on him for the breach of his obligation: An eagle, miſtaking his bald head for a ſtone, having dropped a tortoiſe on it to cruſh the ſhell.

PYTHAGORAS

PYTHAGORAS reſided more years in Egypt than any other Grecian philoſopher. On his return, he enjoined a three years inviolable ſilence on all his pupils. He revealed to his countrymen ſeveral of the ſecrets of maſons, viz: The ſeven different tints of the colorific principle; the ſeven tones in muſic, and the true ſyſtem of aſtronomy, which placed the ſun in the center, the eight revolving planets with their attendants; the advent of comets from one ſyſtem to another, of which each ſtar is a central ſun. Not being furniſhed with inſtruments capable of diſco-

vering the two moſt diſtant planets beyond the orbit of Saturn, his aſtronomy was turned into ridicule by a people whoſe natural frivolity gave them a diſguſt to ſtrong thinking and whoſe vanity precluded cloſe and ſevere examination of imported erudition. His ſchool fell into diſrepute, and he himſelf into neglect, tho' one of the beſt informed and perhaps the wiſeſt of all their philoſophers.

ARISTOTLE ſtudied grammar, logic, rhetoric, natural philoſophy, metaphyſics and ſome other ſciences among the Egyptian maſons. He conveyed

a fund

a fund of knowledge to mankind which he had no right to communicate. Much indeed of what he learned he has miſplaced and disfigured in his writings. He has miſrepreſented ſome of their fineſt ſentiments, not ſo much for want of judgment, as taſte; partly perhaps to amuſe his reader and partly from vanity.

Of all the Grecian philoſophers who viſited Egypt and had the honor of being admitted among the maſons, (which, by the way they carefully concealed) the moſt diſingenuous was Plato. The ſciences of theology,

ethics

ethics and metaphyſics were his peculiar favorites. Whether from ſome regard to the ſacredneſs of his obligation, or whether it was to adapt his doctrines to the taſte of a volatile people, he has ſo haſhed and fritter'd thoſe things which he learned, ſo diſguiſed mangled and involved them, that it would almoſt puzzle a maſon to ſeparate the grain from the chaff in the confuſed maſs of his various treatiſes. A few maſonic jewels ſparkle among that heap of rubbiſh.

THE maſons did not ſuffer only from treacherous brethren; they felt the cruelleſt ſtrokes from the iron hand of power, which ought to have been exerted for their protection and ſecurity. Cambyſes the Perſian monarch made a complete conqueſt of Egypt. He ſternly demanded an account of *their* eſoteric doctrines: on refuſal without his ſubmiſſion to the uſual ceremonies, this haughty prince with his wonted temerity, reſolved on the total extermination of the maſons. Fierce and implacable, he deſtroyed all thoſe that were aſſembled, burned their lodges and ſacrifiſed every individual

dividual of them that could be met with. A conſiderable number of our brethren had ſufficient courage and conduct (what might not ſuch men perform!) to emigrate to an oaſis about three hundred leagues diſtant from hence. An oaſis, of which there are ſeveral in Africa, is a ſort of iſland in the midſt of burning ſands. *This* is about fourſcore leagues in length and ſixty in breadth; abounding with every neceſſary and convenience of life: the rivers loſe themſelves in the ſands while every vegetable and animal is to be met with, that can be found on the reſt of the globe. It

was

was inhabited by a few innocent and ſimple people who received them with open arms. The arts and ſciences are there ſtill cultivated to the higheſt perfection. *There* and there only remains all the knowledge and learning of the antient world. Cambyſes ſent an army of ſeventy thouſand men to purſue and deſtroy them. They were all buried in a whirlwind of ſand. He ſent a ſecond more numerous, which ſhared the ſame fate. It is ſaid that ſome maſons diſguiſed were employed as guides, who knew when and where thoſe violent guſts ariſe and voluntarily ſacrifiſed themſelves for the

preſervation

preſervation of their brethren. Cambyſes raiſed a third army for the ſame purpoſe, determined to lead it himſelf: his death defeated the project. Theſe facts are well known and atteſted by Aſiatic hiſtorians. From that day to this no one has ever viſited this oaſis except Alexander the Macedonian and a few of his followers. He loſt the greateſt part of his people and ſuffered incredible hardſhips himſelf before he reached it. What was an Alexander not equal to? He was highly pleaſed with his entertainment *there*, and they taught their royal viſitor to return in ſafety.

Tho'

tho' it is next to impoſſible to arrive there, it is ſeldom more than thirty or forty years that a few do not venture to viſit Egypt, yet no one ever attempts (tho' he longs in vain) to return. Among the laſt who came from thence my grandfather was one of ſeven.

Of the ſcattered remains of the maſons, ſome emigrated to the Eaſt and ſettled in China. Some wandered into Europe, particularly the northern parts, who aſſumed the name of Druids. Theſe ſtill retained their unalterable attachment to ſecrecy and

never committed any of their knowledge to writing. They have indeed left many aſtoniſhing inſtances of it behind them in the erection of their Stone * calendars. The aera of *their* fabrication may be eaſily aſcertained by calculating the preceſſion of the equinoxes; their ſkill in perſpective is diſplayed in them. Theſe are as falſly as fooliſhly termed by Europeans druidical temples. You well know my brethren, that nothing was more repugnant to their religious principles than to worſhip the deity in any cheiropoietic ſtructure.

* Stone-henge, Staunton Drew, &c.

THE preſent European lodges of maſons, I am informed by our brother Phtharras, are dwindled into mere convivlal aſſemblies. So far from eagerly purſuing ſcience and by the force of their united abilities, puſhing their reſearches to perfection; they indolently content themſelves with the poſſeſſion of the ſhell, without the leaſt regard to the kernel. ſic tranſit gloria mundi. I am my Lord, your's ſincerely.

T. M.

EPISTLE the FIFTH.

My Lord,

MAY 5, 1751.

FOR the future I ſhall not diſcriminate *that* which paſſed or ſhall paſs between us, *in* or *out* of a lodge, only tranſmitting to your Lordſhip an account of what has occurred in our various converſations. The laſt time we met, Phtharras was requeſted to deliver his ſentiments of the grand Architect of the univerſe; on which he addreſſed us, to the beſt of my remembrance, in the ſubſequent terms.

My brother Cnephen, who is ſo greatly my ſuperior in mathematical erudition, has juſtly obſerved that by reaſoning from axioms which we are already certain of, by gradual and irrefragable proceſs, we attain the knowledge of undeniable truths, which we neither did know, nor by any other means could poſſibly acquire the knowledge of. This irrefrangible concatenation of arguments is the glory of a philoſopher and will continue permanent and unalterable until the deſtruction (if it ever happen) of the material ſyſtem. It ſeems to be one of the moſt unaccountable things

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in nature, that the reptile man, ſo totally unqualified for ſuch inveſtigations, ſhould feel a ſtrong impulſe to acquire ſome knowledge of his creator. This impulſe is particularly vigorous in thoſe who are accuſtomed to the habit of ſtrong thinking. Yet to ſuch perſons the vanity of all theſe futilous and impotent attempts is moſt apparent. What philoſophy from the loweſt, meaneſt beginnings has been able to atchieve I will now endeavour to diſplay: To ſhew how far ſhe has been able to mount with her uſual certainty and preciſion.

The name of god I can never articulate without tremulous extaſy. Indeed brother Hakim, nothing ever ſhocked me ſo much as the unwarrantable and wanton freedoms your countrymen take with that awful name. Here he pauſed for ſome time. (In the mean while I beg leave to inform your Lordſhip that Hakim ſignifies a phyſician or doctor, and alſo *the wiſe man.* (Now take your haſty pinch.) He proceeded with an indeſcribable ſplendor of countenance. We ſee in the rolling worlds around us ſuch exertions of *power* as carry immediate conviction that ſuch power is illimitable.

table. We behold in the vegetable creation and their deſigned ſucceſſion diſplays of boundleſs *wiſdom*. In the proviſion for all the various tribes of animals and their perpetual increaſe, intelligence and *goodneſs* are ſufficiently prominent. It muſt be confeſſed, that perfect goodneſs is not ſo conſpicuous as perfect power and perfect wiſdom. The greateſt part of animals are under the indiſpenſible neceſſity of murthering and devouring one another. This ſeems inconſiſtent with perfect goodneſs. I ſhall endeavour to account for this in a more proper place.

Led by theſe eaſy and indubitable principles, demonſtrable to every thinking man, the philoſopher draws the following juſt and inexpugnable concluſions, which thoſe who are not willing to endure the pain of ſevere thinking may ſafely receive on truſt, viz. That an immaterial being exiſts, independent, without beginning or end. That *there is no other immaterial being*. That he is ſelf-exiſtent, entirely incomprehenſible and that it is abſolutely impoſſible that we, who are formed of matter, can entertain the ſlighteſt idea, or the ſmalleſt conception of him. Our utmoſt knowledge

of

of him is abſtracted ignorance, It conſiſts wholly in negatives. When we ſay he is poſſeſſed of perfect power, wiſdom and goodneſs; this amounts to no more than that he is *not* imperfect, *not* feeble, *not* fluctuating, *not* malevolent. Had it been neceſſary that man ſhould have known *any thing* of his creator, he would have been endowed with other faculties than thoſe he poſſeſſes. Perhaps it may not be practicable to convey any knowledge of himſelf to a *created* being in the higheſt ſtate of exaltion. So immenſe the chaſm between entity and evaneſcence? How truly ridi-

culous

culous are all the efforts which have been made by the beſt and wiſeſt men of all nations to conceive of deity? In what manner have they thought, in what manner have they expreſſed thoſe thoughts? By thinking him altogether ſuch an one as themſelves.

MAN juſtly appreciates the invaluable ſenſe of ſeeing: God therefore *muſt* have an all-ſeeing eye. The hand enables man to ſubjugate all the reſt of the animal creation: To god therefore is aſcribed a ſtrong hand and out-ſtretched arm to deal vengeance on his foes: That is, all

thoſe who are ſo unfortunate as to think differently from the deſcriber. Man has an ear to liſten to the requeſts of his brethren: God *muſt* have an ear open to the bold effuſions of folly and preſumption: Nay more we are told, that he not only *hears* the petitions, but lays his immutability aſide that he may anſwer the prayers of a ſickly or over-heated imagination. The tongue of man is his glory; god *muſt* ſpeak in thunder to ſcare the human race. Man has feet to convey him from place to place; the footſteps of the deity are in deep waters. Such puerile deſcriptions are

too inſignificant to claim the obſervation of a philoſopher, if they did not carry ſufficient conviction of the total ignorance and incapacity of man to think of God. Were our fellow animals to deliver their ſentiments of him, being drawn from ſimilar ſources, they would be equally appoſite. The ſheep would pourtray him as meek and patient. The lion as boiſterous, noiſy and ferocious. The bee as buſy, active and induſtrious. The crow as vigilant; and the ant as parſimonious. Would not any one of *their* pictures be a likeneſs as ſtriking and their obſervations equally applicable and juſt with

with thoſe of the human race. The expreſſion of your countryman brother Hakim, who was a moſt excellent philoſopher (Newton) that ſpace is the *ſenſorium of the deity*, tho' moſt ſublime, is yet equally as abſurd as any one mentioned.

MANKIND have been juſt as happy (and as wiſe) in beſtowing their own *good qualities* on the ſupreme as attributes. There is an expreſſion commonly uſed by writers on the *attributes* (as they are whimſically called) which always ſhakes me with horror, viz. the *nature of god*: It is

the rankeſt blaſphemy. The God of nature is indeed proper, as he is the author of nature and all her powers. We may examine the nature of a dog or a monkey: to dare apply that word to the ſelf exiſtent being is unpardonable folly, arrogance and impiety. The ignorance and inſolence of men is no leſs conſpicuous in their aſcription of attributes to the great unknown.

NOTHING is more amiable among men than virtue, nothing more eſtimable than morality. Theſe are relative to human conduct. A virtuous

deity

deity is the greateſt monſter of the entia rationis, for virtue implies ſelf-denial. That God conducts himſelf towards men as a *Moral Governor* has been boldly affirmed and as readily ſwallowed by the wide throat of credulity. This is certainly as great a truth as tranſubſtantiation. We need but open our eyes to be convinced of the contrary. Are the moſt moral part of mankind the moſt happy? So far from it, the fineſt moral qualities ſubject the poſſeſſor to the cruelleſt ſufferings. Are the immoral immediately and without impunity puniſhed? To ſay that things will be

ſet to rights *hereafter* is a mere gratis dictum. Have we indubitable proofs of a future ſtate? Beſides, it is a perverſion of all reaſoning to conclude that if the deity acts not according to theſe laws *here*, that he will change his conduct and act by different laws *hereafter*. If an immutable being, with whom there can be no ſhadow of change, is not juſt, according to *our* ideas of juſtice, in *this* world, he will never be juſt in another. That *he* muſt eſteem virtue and morality becauſe we ought to do ſo, is an argument worthy of a drivelling ideot. Rather let us ſay with the

the enlightened Arabian, Job, if we do good, what is it to him; and if we do evil, he is not affected by it.

THE God of every man is different from his neighbour's: according to his temper and diſpoſition, it is a God of his own formation. My nation repreſent him as a ſtern inexorable tyrant, a lord of hoſts; who took pleaſure in the ſight of embattled armies, who taught their fingers to fight and led them on in all the pomp of war to deſtroy and maſſacre each other. When they ſacked a city, bleſſed is he, (ſays the holy prophet in the

name

name of the lord) who taketh their little ones and daſheth out their brains againſt the ſtones. Equally juſt was the picture of the laſcivious Jupiter, or the jolly Bacchus. Such alſo is the Chriſtian God who receives no ſatisfaction but from the mortifications, voluntary ſufferings and miſeries of his creatures. They can only pleaſe him by diſpleaſing themſelves, by eating that which they do not like; or by total abſtinence, which is beſt of all. Highly meritorious it is to abſtain from all commerce with the other ſex, leſt they ſhould wickedly indulge any ſenſual gratification. There is no

end

end of reciting or marking the follies and vanity of the human race. Yet man, tho' born like the wild aſs's colt, would know as God.

There is no truth we can attain a more certain knowledge of than the exiſtence of an immaterial, perfect, and immutable being. It is alſo as certain that all the powers of man are inadequate to the conception of the leaſt, the ſlighteſt ſhadow of any knowledge reſpecting him. We can only muſe in ſilent extacy. All the religion of maſons conſiſts, as ye well know, in one word—*Gratitude* to the

great

great unknown. Yet even *we* muſt own, while we are ſenſible of the futility of prayer, that HE is exalted far beyond all bleſſing and praiſe. I am, my Lord, your's ſincerely.

T. M.

EPISTLE

EPISTLE the SIXTH.

My Lord,

JUNE 2, 1751.

YOUR Lordſhip's pacquet gave me the higheſt ſatisfaction. In ſtrong thinking and elegance of expreſſion I cheerfully acknowledge your Lordſhip's ſuperiority. In quickneſs of diſcernment and exquiſiteneſs of taſte I ſhall not readily yield the palm. I often heave a ſigh for your Lordſhip's preſence: As that is not poſſible, I muſt intreat, what I really have the utmoſt need of, your Lordſhip's aſſiſtance. Onephen and Phthar-

ras

ras had each of them ſome notion of divine miſſion of particular perſons previous to their mutual conferences and diſputations, Cnephen ſurrendered Oſiris in exchange for Moſes. David and Solomon were (I think unjuſtly) given up for Iſis and Orus. Cnephen ſupported the cauſe of the elder Hermes with a ſeeming in-extinguiſhable ardor, contending for the impoſſiblity of ſuch wiſdom being acquired without preternatural communication. Phtharras, after batt'ling it for many days obliged him to decamp, not without the accompaniment of his own four greater and twelve minor prophets.

prophets. And you.——No my Lord, I am ſtill unſhaken in my chriſtian faith. I told them jocularly, they reminded me of the Roman triumvirate, who were at an entire ſtand while each attempted to preſerve his friend: But on giving up all their reſpective friends and relations, furniſhed out a very decent proſcription and carnage.

Tho' they both reject the notion of divine inſpiration, I have extorted a frank confeſſion from them, that for amiableneſs and reſpectability of character, no one ever equalled the founder of the Chriſtian religion.

Such is their candor, that with reaſon on my ſide, I am not without hopes of bringing them to embrace the Chriſtian faith. To this end, with equal ardor and ſincerity, I beg your Lordſhip's aſſiſtance. There is no one on earth more able to ſupport me in defence of Chriſtianity againſt two of the moſt acute reaſoners in the world. They ſee inſtantaneouſly the ſlighteſt flaw in a link of the reaſoning chain. I confeſs they have raiſed ſome doubts. A mind in a doubtful ſtate is on an inclined plane contiguous to infidelity. More of this hereafter, I ſhall now preſent your

Lordſhip

Lordſhip with a delicious morçeau of the maſonic philoſophy of nature.

Our brethren, ſays Cnephen, in their frequent meetings, communicated to each other all their reſpective acquirements of ſcience, when confirmed by experiments, or proved by irrefragable arguments. As they poſſeſſed all the learning of the world, they proceeded on the firmeſt foundations, aſcending gradually from the loweſt beginnings 'till they arrived at the diſcovery of the great architect of the univerſe; an immaterial ſelf exiſtent being, of whom *nothing can be known.*

This

This unbroken ſcale was the work of a great number of centuries, a contracted plan of which I am now to lay before you, beginning inverſely, where they terminated their enquiries. I am ready to produce my proofs, if called upon, for any propoſition that may ſeem objectionable.

THE being of all beings firſt created ſpace in a manner wholly inconceivable by us. He then furniſhed it with the firſt element of all material beings, pure uncontaminated air. His next production was the phlogiſtic element: Theſe two com-

bined immediately formed light. The third element, which ſeems to be as univerſally diffuſed thro' ſpace as light, is the vitriolic acid. Theſe are the principles from which all other matter was fabricated. On theſe the deity impreſſed a continual, inceſſant and endleſs *motion*. This *motive power*, commonly called nature, is communicated to every particle of matter, from whatever different combinations formed and in no ſtate can ever ceaſe for a moment without annihilation. When pure air is condenſed by the phlogiſtic principle, *water* is the reſult. This globe therefore which

we now inhabit, was originally nothing more than a maſs of water. To follow the deity in his creative proceſs.

When this and the other globes of water were produced, a ſufficiency of the phlogiſtic principle (the matter both of light and heat) was confined to the central ſun, to wheel round his axis: the watery globes rolled round their's, impelled by centripetal motion and prevented erring from their elliptical courſe by the projectile force of that all powerful being, which impreſſed motion on every conſtituent

atom.

atom. To confine ourſelves to the examination of that planet in which we are moſt intereſted. The next procedure of creative power was to fill this world of waters with animal inhabitants, to provide for deſtruction and ſucceſſion in the profuſeſt manner.

FROM the furious motion and prodigious power of ſtormy winds, the perpetual agitation and juſtling of the waters and the centrifugal efforts of the globe, the bones, ſhells and other excrementitious parts of fiſh were thrown to the ſurface: From theſe

originated

originated all the infinitely various combinations of ſubſtances which *now* appear on the earth. The calcareous matter was firſt held in ſolution by the aerial acid; this being more ponderous than air, deſcended from it and mingling with water, ſuſpended it's earth. If it met with any other matter to which it had a ſtronger affiance, it deſerted the ſalited maſs. Hence rocks aroſe, earth, marbles, ſtones, &c. From the mingled zoophytes madrepores, fiſh and putrefied vegetables in the ſea, with the moving elements, aroſe all the combined ſubſtances in nature. That vegetable

ſubſtances

ſubſtances abound at the bottom of the ſea, in ſhallow water where earth was already formed, is evident from thoſe fiſh which are always found feeding at the bottom, on viſible graſſes, where there is no great depth of water, as turtles in the warm and whales in the cold climates.

As there is ſo much ſolid ſubſtance that ariſes not quite to the ſurface, ſo there muſt be much thrown up intirely beyond it. The phlogiſtic principle rouzed by the energetic impulſe of inceſſant motion, will burſt in flames and produce volcanos.

Hence

Hence aroſe iſlands, mountains and maſſes of all deſcriptions. Earth now appears with the effects of all the various combinations formed by nature's motive power. It is from hence eaſy to account for the manner in which all minerals and metallic ſubſtances were formed: Even the diamond from it's watery drop; tho' needleſs to you who are ſo well acquainted with chemiſtry. The *firſt* land that appeared we have all the reaſon in the world to think was Egypt and the conſequent continent of Africa. We know from indiſputable documents, that Egypt was immenſely po-

pulous

pulous for ſome thouſands of years before Aſia emerged from the ocean. I beg the favor of brother Phtharras, as it pertains to his department, to convey to us an account of the commencement of Aſia.

To this the candid Jew, with inexpreſſible benignity in his awful countenance, replied. Our brother Cnephen's veracity is un-impeachable. He aſſerts nothing at random. He is too cautious to utter a ſingle ſentence, without demonſtrative proofs at hand; if called upon: Theſe, brother Hakim, you may receive from

him

him at pleaſure. There is nothing excites my admiration more than the cloſeneſs of his reaſoning, owing to his attachment to the mathematics. His bold declarations, which ſeem at firſt bluſh, unfounded, we are ſurpriſed to find him capable of ſo eaſily and invincibly maintaining. For my own part, conſcious of my inferiority in profound ratiocination, I ſhall deliver my ſentiments with the utmoſt warineſs and if in any thing erroneous, expect that he will immediately interrupt and ſet me right. Truth we would not loſe ſight of for a moment: it is an object deareſt to a maſon's heart.

About the time that the iſthmus of Suez was thrown up, Aſia, as it is now called, gradually emerged from the ſea. Before I proceed, I muſt beg leave to remark, as our brother Cnephen continued not his recital to that epocha, that tho' the buſy hand of nature can form every material ſubſtance we behold, by un-interrupted motion, yet it is far beyond her power to frame a ſingle organized body, whether vegetable or animal. The firſt cauſe only could create a *mould* of any plant or tree, with a reſorvoir to contain thoſe particles unneceſſary for its own ſupport and determine them

to that place where the miniature ſeed is formed, whereby its ſucceſſion might be copiouſly and endleſsly maintained. When dry land appeared, as my prophet Moſes truly obſerved, the interference of the deity was indiſpenſibly neceſſary.

His hiſtory of the creation is certainly juſt, which he acquired of the Egyptian maſons, not from a divine afflatus. God then clothed the ſurface of the earth with whatever vegatables he thought fit to make. The moulds being completed were ſoon filled by the motive power, the redun-

dant

dant atoms caſt off from every part to form a ſeed from which the ſaid power by elongating it's fibres, increaſing it's bulk and developing it's form, could re-produce an invariable ſucceſſion of ſimilar plants. It is true, every leaf is diſſimilar, every part is variegated, yet the whole is exactly alike. Nature is a blind tho' admirable artiſt. She muſt adjuſt whatever particles firſt obtrude themſelves, however untractable or unfit. She performs her buſineſs with unremitted vigor and inceſſant ſedulity. To prepare a mould exceeds her utmoſt power: When prepared, ſhe can fill and perpetuate it. Her works

are not perfect; they neceſſarily vary, as I before obſerved. Not two leaves on the ſame tree or in the ſame roſe are preciſely alike: Yet we can diſcriminate each tree or each roſe from every other ſimilar ſpecies. It is ſuppoſed that the vegetable ſyſtem was finiſhed many thouſands of years before any animal was produced. Moſes uſes a definite time (as *day*, or ſeven days) for an indefinite one: A cuſtom common with all the Eaſtern writers. His account of the formation of animals is as accurate as juſt. For this the creator's power muſt have been manifeſted. *He* only could frame

a proper mould, diſtinct and complete in itſelf, ſubject to the law of elective attraction, marked with indelible *impreſſions*, invincibly impelled to exert them, with the power of increaſing reſpective reproduction.

Moses is miſtakenly ſuppoſed to give a ſketch of the *whole* creation. Nothing was further from his intention. So far from alluding to, or giving a view of *all* the works of God, he does not even compriſe this ſyſtem. He confines himſelf to this globe and with reſpect to animals, his recital is merely local. Soon after the appear-

ance of the iſthmus which reſtored the communication between Africa and Aſia, the firſt Aſatic pair of human beings was created. That Africa was extremely populous previous to this period may be eaſily demonſtrated. Among thouſands of ſtone pillars loaded with hieroglyphics, there is one about ſix leagues diſtance from hence, engraved by Seth the ſon of Adam, with an account of the time when he viſited and when he left Egypt. This tallies with the time mentioned by Moſes when Seth muſt have exiſted.

THE Egyptians, as well as all the Africans were originally black with woolly heads. The deſcendants from Adam are of a different ſpecies. The vaſt commerce and immenſe flux of foreigners into Egypt, by mingling with the natives, have occaſioned that alteration of colour and features in this province.

EUROPE next appeared and was peopled with a race of men quite different from thoſe in either of the other continents. Other animals were formed properly adapted to the climate they were to inhabit, and fur-

niſhed with ſuitable *impreſſions*. America was the laſt, tho' not the ſmalleſt continent that has emerged. In all probability whatever for the future ariſe, will be iſlandic. For the cultivation of the American continent a diſtinct ſpecies of copper-colour'd human beings were created, with animals very different from thoſe on the three others. As many iſlands aroſe and ſtill continue to ariſe (ſeveral within our memory) it is probable that they alſo were peopled with different ſpecies of the ſame genus. Great and

marvellous

marvellous are thy works, oh! immaterial unknown being!

I am,

my Lord,

your's ſincerely,

T. M.

EPITLLE the SEVENTH.

My Lord,

OCTOBER 18, 1751.

CHEMISTRY has been carried infinitely higher by the Egyptians than the Europeans can form any idea of. Pancirollus, if I do not misremember, gives a detail of four hundred arts and ſciences which the moderns have not yet recovered the knowledge of, in his treatiſe de rebus perditis. Chemiſtry is certainly one of that number. Brother Cnephen who has ſtudied nature and her operations with

with unabating ſedulity, is, I am perſuaded, better acquainted with her proceſſes than any man breathing. How ſimple the primary law he has exantlated. Every particle of matter in perpetual motion, attracting and repelling. At the advanced age of ninety two, he poſſeſſes the full vigor of all his mental faculties. The wonders he has ſhewn me in the peculiar affinities of various parts of matter, in attracting and others in repelling each other, with the power of chemiſtry in their combinations and derangement would ſtagger your belief. Not therefore to hazard my own credit, I ſhall

tranſmit

tranſmit to you a graphical delineation of the proceſſes, a deſcription of the neceſſary inſtruments, with ſuch directions for making the experiments, that it will be impoſſible for you to fail of ſucceſs. Thus you will acquire conviction of thoſe amazing truths by ocular demonſtration. This I ſhall ſend to your Lordſhip by itſelf in a ſeperate pacquet, which will furniſh you with *materials for thinking*, ay and acting too, for the remaining term of your exiſtence, were it to exceed that of Methuſelah's.

To bend the rays of the phlogiſtic or, (as is uſually called by maſons) the colorific principle, was the glory of a Newton. To diſſect that principle, to compound, and decompound it at pleaſure was beyond his power. Cnephen has demonſtrated to me how light was formed by the union of *this* with pure air. He can deſtroy light in a moment and re-produce it ad libitum. From an union of the vitriolic acid with an alcali he can expel an aerial acid, which is of vaſt importance in the hand of nature. From a combination of the vitriolic acid (which he ſays is the ſource or baſis

of

of all others mineral or vegetable) with metal, he produces a ſufficiency of the colorific principle united with common air to form an elaſtic fluid ten times lighter than atmoſpherical air. Theſe and many other permanent aery fluids, both alcaline and acid he has manufactured to the number of ſeventeen before me. Moſt of them are conveyed into the mouth of a glaſs ſpheroid inverted in water. I enquired into the cui bono of each. Of ſome he gave me a very ſatisfactory account, particularly of the aerial acid. This being heavier than the atmoſpherical air, is of immenſe utility as an

inſtrument in conducting and completing the operations of nature. I was pleaſed with a whimſical experiment of the lighteſt of theſe fluids, which was ſo inflammable as to take fire at the approach of a lamp and iſſued out of the glaſs with a report as loud as that of a piſtol. I enquired if this light fluid might not be applied uſefully to the elevation of ſolid bodies and conveying them from place to place. He ſaid, it could not, becauſe the form in which it was incloſed muſt neceſſarily approach that of a globe, conſequently be incapable

of

of direction by any known power, but be intirely at the mercy of the winds

He can reduce the colorific principle to a ſolid tangible ſubſtance, which is the moſt amazing effect of chemical art. He has ſhewn me this principle in it's latent ſtate of innoxious heat. Fire in all it's ſtages is a plaything with him. His doctrine of elective attraction I am not maſter of yet: To ſay the truth, I do not *perfectly* underſtand all it's complications. What a wretched tyro am I, who thought myſelf ſuch a proficient in

chemiſtry! The art is boundleſs and beyond meaſure faſcinating. A full account of the whole we are preparing for you, with ſuch eaſy and familar inſtructions for experimenting, as will enable you to puſh your reſearches as far as you pleaſe. I was aſtoniſhed to find that he was perfectly well acquainted with the electric fluid, ſo lately diſcovered by the Europeans. This he ſays is a combination of the phlogiſtic principle and vitriolic acid. He demonſtrated it's properties, ſhewed me it's power, that it is the only cauſe of earthquakes, one of which he diverted me with (and a tremendous

dous one it was) as well as ſome very loud claps of thunder and vivid lightning, tho' the ſky was perfectly clear. I wiſh I could find him ignorant of ſomething. When my chemical work is finiſhed, with all the diagrams and promiſed corrections of the greateſt natural philoſopher in the univerſe, I ſhall ſend your Lordſhip the whole together in one complete work, which it would be very incongruous to include in deſultory epiſtles. I did not think it poſſible that ſuch proficiency in this ſcience was within the reach of human abilities. It ſeems chiefly by the help of

this

this that he has been able to trace the grand architect of all things, from the minuteſt beginnings, in all his works, to the firſt formation of things. Thus has he *un-ravelled* the work of creation and aſcended to that achme whence all the powers of reaſon reſiliate. From whence alone can be deduced a totally unknown, immaterial, ſelf-exiſtent intelligence: for, pondere numero et menſura fecit omnia deus. Would to heaven that I could convey his ſublime conceptions and irrefragable ratiocination in terms adequate to thoſe he delivers them in.

WHO could imagine, much leſs have fore-ſeen, that in a country where ragged Ignorance reigns deſpotic upon her clumſy throne, there might be picked up ſuch *materials for thinking*. Nor ſhould I have met with them had it not been for the invaluable priviledge of being a Free-maſon. Far greater wonders have I for your Lordſhip's ear, but not to be communicated to any other. A regular account of our converſations you muſt not expect; you will recieve the reſult of them condenſed in as ſmall a compaſs as poſſible. If ſtrong and inconteſtible proofs of ſome bold

aſſertions

aſſertions are omitted, you may depend upon it that they are not deficient. Should your Lordſhip's keen eye mark a neglect of that ſort with which you are diſſatisfied, you need only to point it out and ſhall be immediately convinced by the production of thoſe arguments which were ſuppreſſed. In many inſtances I deemed them un-neceſſary, or thought they might occur to you on diſpaſſionate examination of the reſpective topics.

I HAVE juſt received your Lordſhip's pacquet, the beſt I ever had, becauſe

the

the largeſt. I never peruſed anything with more pleaſure and heart-felt exultation. Your arguments in favor of Chriſtanity are a noble pile built on human teſtimony. My friends will admire the writer. Indeed my Lord I glory in the aſſiſtance you have afforded me and of which I ſhall ſtand in the utmoſt need in contending with two ſuch opponents. They diſcover with the celerity of lightning the ſlighteſt flaw in a link of the reaſoning chain. I can ſee none in your's, which gives me the higheſt ſatisfaction as well as the juſteſt and ſincereſt conviction. Nothing I think

has

has eſcaped me which has been publiſhed on that ſubject from Grotius to Leſlie and Leland: Yet your arguments are perfectly new to me and ſuch as never occurred to a Lyttleton or a Weſt. *That* from the Pſalms and the character of David is an un-anſwerable proof of divine inſpiration. Things appear to me now in a different and much clearer light than they ever did before. I am equally aſtoniſhed and delighted with your production. A man who can diſpaſſionately attend to your proofs, muſt have a very weak head or a very bad heart to reject the chriſtian faith

faith. I ſhall calmly hear all my brethren have to ſay on the ſubject of religion and you ſhall ſoon after recieve the reſult of our converſation on the Greek teſtament (which Phtharras has promiſed to read over with the utmoſt care) and your inimitable defence of it's authenticity. I am, my Lord with the moſt un-feigned gratitude for your laſt invaluable favor, your's ſincerely.

T. M.

EPISTLE the EIGHTH.

My Lord,

NOVEMBER 27, 1751.

OUR venerable brother Cnephen, in explaining the philoſophy of nature, proceeded as follows: From the abſolute and neceſſary one-neſs of the deity, we might be led to conjecture that he would inſtitute *one* cauſe from which every intended effect ſhould flow. This actually appears to be the caſe. The unceaſing *motive power* impreſſed on each particle of matter he created is an adequate cauſe

of every poſſible combination in nature. The particles of gold in ingots continue in motion as much as in a ſtate of liquefaction. Our ſenſes can only judge of the ſurface and often decieve us in that reſpect: To know the component parts or internal figures of a body, reaſon and experiment muſt join to aſſiſt us. Theſe aſſure us that every atom is in perpetual and inceſſant motion. The rottenneſs of wood, the change, in time, of the hardeſt pebbles, the length'ning of a metallic bar by heat, the cloſer crouding of it's particles in a colder climate, and many more obſervations may convince

us

us of the fact. Becauſe we ſee it not, is no objection. There is room enough for their attractive and repulſive motion in the moſt compacted ſubſtance, on account of the pores. Perhaps all the matter in the univerſe brought together without pores, might be covered by the hand of a man. The monades, or atoms reduced to their ſmalleſt ſize are doubtleſs of various forms or ſhapes. The motion however of each ſeems to be cycloidal, attracting or repelling. In putrid ſubſtances this vibratory motion is exceeding furious, as though the particles, ſo well fitted, were now be-

come eager to enter the mould of ſome vegetable or animal ſubſtance, to forward the works of nature. By *nature* is meant this *motive power*. *This* is the law by which all being exiſt, the ſame law by which all beings flow in uninterrupted and endleſs ſucceſſion. Nature is a blind agent and muſt receive thoſe particles which firſt offer themſelves, not ſo proper ſome times as others would have been. Hence the diverſity and hence the deformity of the various vegetable and animal productions. No work of nature is, or can be perfect. It is true, the ſame *motive power*, which is obliged to adopt improper

improper particles, will make every effort to eject them from the ſyſtem: Hence tumors in trees, plants and different parts of animals, &c. The fibres of every ſeed elongated, yet confined in it's proper mould, continually increaſing the bulk, muſt neceſſarily produce a ſimilar plant to the parent, though the parts are infinitely diverſified.

WHAT inconceivable wiſdom is diſplayed in the conſtruction of the vegetable kingdom? In forming ſuch exact moulds for confining the operations of nature within the ſtricteſt limits

What marked and illimitable intelligence, in preparing, when the plant has arrived at it's perfect ſtate, a curious receptacle for the ſuperfluities of every part, condenſed and capable of re-producing a ſame ſort in boundleſs and endleſs ſucceſſion! Here h pauſed: We joined him in ſilent extaſy, which alone, we muſt own with the quakers, (if any thing is) can be worthy of the name of rational devotion. He thus reſumed his diſcourſe.

THAT water was the ſource from which all things originated, was a doctrine taught by Thales in the Mileſian

ſchool,

ſchool, which he learned from us. This is the only truth the Grecian philoſophers retained unadulterated. That water ſhould firſt compoſe and then be rendered capable of being ſtrained through ſuch fine tubes as form the hard rough ſubſtance which incloſes the kernel of a peach is truly wonderful. The haſty manner in which nature effects it increaſes our admiration. How exactly ſimilar is every flower, though the colors will vary from the cauſe already aſſigned. Every leaf is diverſified, yet known at firſt ſight to belong to it's peculiar tree or plant. Nature, reſtricted with regard to the mould,

mould, cannot err, whatever particles ſhe puſhes into it. Nature is unweared in her operations; ever reſtleſs, her buſy hand is conſtantly, ſilently and energetically forming different ſubſtances. Slow, yet certain in her works, ſhe is perpetually combining and de-compounding. A thouſand years would ſcarce be ſufficient to throw up a mountain from the ſea. Volcanos may aſſiſt her to produce iſlands more expeditiouſly. Never could ſhe form a flower, plant, or tree, if almighty intelligence had not prepared the mould. Theſe indeed ſhe can fill with ſuch rapidity as would clothe the

the whole ſurface of the earth in as ſhort a ſpace of time as is inconceivable, with any individual when formed.

NATURE ſeems to appreciate vegetables, if we may ſo ſpeak of an un-intelligent power, as her moſt favourite part of the creation. She ſeems to intimate that animals were only formed to increaſe *their* conſumption and conſequently their re-production ad infinitum. *Theſe* ſhare an inferior part of her attention and care. All her knowledge is confined to *deſtruction* and *ſucceſſion*. I muſt beg leave to impoſe the taſk on my brother Phtharras to

give

give us the hiſtory of the *animal* creation, a ſubject he is much better acquainted with than I am; particularly of that two-leg'd unfeather'd animal, of whom he can relate wonders. No one, I believe, has a more perfect knowledge of men and their manners.

PHTHARRAS bowed gracefully and replied. As this ſummons was unexpected, I muſt ſtrive to collect my ſcattered thoughts and reſume the thread where our brother dropped it. That the vegetable tribe were not made for animals, but animals for them I am as

well

well ſatisfied as he can be; yet that the latter were created wholly for their ſake is not ſo clear. Partly to diffuſe animal life, though not entirely on their own account, and partly with other intentions, animals received exiſtence. The deity has a regard to a *whole* in all connexions, bearings and dependencies, which it is beyond the tether of our intellects to apprehend. The ſole creator by *one* means completes many ends. By *one* cauſe produces innumerable effects. By *one* act fullfils various views. *One* contrivance of *his* anſwers infinite purpoſes.

THE diſplay of wiſdom in the vegetable creation is boundleſs and aſtoniſhing: The ſource of endleſs delight and admiration to the ſons of men. Let us now turn our thoughts to the formation of animals. The ſame *one-neſs* of deſign is apparent here, whether in the inhabitants of water, air, or earth: All are equally ſubject to the ſame law, un-erringly guided by the ſame rule. That there muſt have exiſted a *firſt* pair of men, flies, monkies, or any other voluntary locomotive beings is ſufficiently obvious and manifeſt. In the creation of each of theſe ſyſtems, the almighty touch *impreſſed* on the original

ginal pair a peculiar *bend* on every fibre; that as the moving particles came into contact with it, they might neceſſarily take the ſame turn and effect the ſame influence. Thus from the reſtrictiveneſs of the mould, ſome atoms are directed to form a brain, others a liver, others a heart, and others, though of the ſame ſort, to ſtrain ſimilar fluids through the various ſecretory glands. When the animal is arrived at a ſtate of maturity, the ſuperfluous particles are thrown off from every part, to be reſerved, with the ſame *impreſſions*, unalterable, indelible, in a ſeed, to be elongated and

ſwelled 'till it produce a ſimilar being. The materials of which they are compoſed are very different, as may be known from the various colors of hair externally and the vaſt diverſity of the internal parts: Yet ſtill alike, nature cannot vary from the original impreſſions. As no two leaves are exactly alike, neither are any two hairs. Sometimes the atoms moſt contiguous are ſo unfit that the production of nature is neceſſarily monſtrous. The impreſſions of ſupreme wiſdom are too ſtrong to be obliterated; or even often perverted by the intractability of matter. Nature always exerts her utmoſt

energy

energy to remedy ſuch accidents, tho' ſometimes it is impracticable.

THESE *impreſſions*, with reſpect to the ſeemingly ſpontaneous conduct of animals are commonly termed, (an unmeaning word) inſtinct. A bird that never ſaw a neſt, will fabricate a ſimilar one with it's parent with whatever materials are at hand. The due conſideration of theſe *impreſſions* is of the utmoſt importance: Want of it has admitted that horrid propoſition, deus eſt anima brutorum. It cannot be expected that we ſhould delineate the manner in which this primary touch

was made. It exceeds all human thought to explain any act of the immaterial being. The effects we are at liberty to trace, diverging in innumerable ſtreams.

Rolled and compacted in one ſyſtem, the motive power of nature fills as it increaſes every part of the individual, adjuſted to the deſign of the intelligent contriver. However imperfect the operations of nature may be, yet the firſt *impreſſions* remain unalterable and are never unprepared for vigorous exertion. Be matter ever ſo untractable and the lamb or the child

ever

ever ſo uncouthly formed, it no ſooner breathes than it is ready to apply it's mouth to the mother's teat. Every animal has recieved an *impreſſion* to direct it to it's proper food, though never ſeen before. Theſe *impreſſions* were originally made on the nerves.

The *unity* of deſign is conſpicuous in all the works of the deity, when traced to their ſource. By *one* cauſe are the moſt various and innumerable effects produced. An admirable proof of *this* is the formation of the *nervous* ſyſtem in every animal. A nerve, it is well known, is alone capable of ſenſation.

From

From this ſingle texture all the wonders of animalization are eaſily explicable. From the nerve, every action of every living being is to be accounted for, whether of inſects, fiſh, birds, beaſts, or man. No locomotive being can act without impulſe. There can be no effect without an adequate cauſe. Some *motive* muſt exiſt for the minuteſt action of the minuteſt being poſſeſſed of vitality. This *motive* is *one* and the ſame in all, viz. PLEASURE. As attraction and repulſion are contrary and equal, pleaſure being the only object that attracts, pain is the only one that repells.

When an animal feels a pleaſure-able ſenſation from an action, he will ſeek it's renewal by the moſt apparent means, as often as poſſible. If affect-ed with pain, he will as carefully avoid the means whereby it was occaſioned. If free from pain, it can reſt ſatisfied in a quieſcent ſtate of torpidity, untill rouzed by the expectation of approx-imating pleaſure. This clue will lead us to the perfect expoſition of the con-duct of every animal, if we are diſpoſed to ſuch enquiries. *Their* actions are as neceſſary and un-avoidable as the fall of an alarum. Spontaneity is an un-philoſophical word, ſpecious to the ſuperficial

ſuperficial thinker; cloſely examined, is found to have no meaning. The aſs that ſtrays beyond his limits to browze on a delicious thiſtle, is handſomely cudgelled for his pains: He meets a ſimilar temptation, which he greedily ſwallows. The puniſhment is too diſtant and too diminutive an object to be a motive ſufficiently reſtritive. The thief who ſteals a purſe is whipped; he meets an opportunity of ſtealing another: The whip is too far off and may be eluded, conſequently too precarious to be a ſufficient motive of prevention.

But as man, you will ſay, is a being of too high conſequence, not to claim a ſeparate and excluſive converſation, we will reſerve our thoughts about him untill the next time we aſſemble,

Several days had elapſed, wherein our converſations on very intereſting and important ſubjects had paſſed, not irrelevant to man, before Phtharras could be prevailed on to continue his lecture. Some humilating conceſſions I was obliged to make, with the utmoſt repugnance, compelled by the irreſiſtible arguments of Cnephen. Con-

vinced

vinced, yet diſſatisfied, with ſurly reluctance, I felt the neceſſity of yielding ſorts which were not tenable. Arguing againſt palpable truths is nugatory. His evident ſuperiority filled me with vexation and confuſion. The venerable ſage mildly requeſted me to lay aſide prejudices and think for myſelf. Shake off, ſays he, all thoſe trammels impoſed by authority or contrivance of thoſe whoſe ſentiments you thought it your duty to revere. Diveſt yourſelf of that tenacious attachment to pre-concieved notions, however ſtrongly rivetted, when you find them unfounded. Man is liable to error, delights in deception

deception and hates to be un-decieved. We are alive to your feelings, ſympathiſe with you in thoſe unpleaſant fluctuations which are the previous ſacriſices, the neceſſary oblations duely and juſtly tributary to TRUTH. Non perſuadebis etiamſi perſuaſeris I often recollected. The road being cleared and the hearts of each party in perfect uniſon, Phtharras proceeded to the diſcuſſion of a ſubject which ſo intimately concerns us and delivered his thoughts on man, an account of which I ſhall reſerve for my next letter. I am, my Lord, your's ſincerely,

EPISTLE the NINTH.

My Lord,

DECEMBER 17, 1751.

THE *Nerve* reſumed Phthar-ras, is the ſource of all the boaſted powers of man. From *this* may be developed and become explicable the intricacy and perplexity of the diver-ſified paſſions and all the various complicated actions of this animal machine. He is ſubject to the ſame laws with each of his fellow ani-mals. He has received the ſame *impreſſions* and is impelled by the ſame motive. His actions are equally the offſpring of Neceſſity. He cannot be

or do any thing that he who made him did not intend he ſhould be and do. The firſt cauſe muſt be the cauſe of *all* cauſes and effects.

THE fluids of man circulate and his ſolids are condenſed in the ſame manner with thoſe of every being that has the principle of vitality. He is ſupported by food and drink, of which he feels the want as much as they. He is ſtimulated by the ſame irreſiſtible impetus to increaſe his kind. He alſo receives the immediate reward of pleaſure for complying with the dictates of nature. As he was

deſigned to ſubjugate the reſt and maintain the ballance of every ſpecies, he is furniſhed with inſtruments well adapted to the purpoſes of government. By the *hand* he is rendered capable of bringing them all into ſubjection. By the *tongue*, in communicating his ideas and forming ſocial connexions, he is enabled to maintain that decided and invincible ſuperiority. He is therefore endued with much larger plexus of nerves than any other animal; a congeries of brain ſeven times weightier than that of the largeſt, or any; ſome apes excepted, as the ſaiou. Have *they impreſſions* to direct the courſe of

the motive particles to their proper arrangement and diſtinctive purpoſes? So has man. The ſame ſordid materials that compoſe a cabbage or a cherry-ſtone; when decompounded, are as ready and as fit to form the foot of an aſs, the eye of a lynx, or the brain of a man. Each putrid atom will find it's proper place, puſhed by the wonder-working finger of nature, into it's deſtined mould. Drawn into thoſe fine filaments, the nervous ſyſtem is the only baſis on which we need to reſt and from thence account for all the ſeeming contradictions and all the ſtrange workings of this fanciful microcoſm.

coſm, this nexus utriuſque mundi of the Chriſtians, this Horatian *deity*, niſi cum pituita moleſta.

Our brother Cnephen has already unfolded to you all the myſteries of nature from *one* cauſe, the inceſſant motion of every particle of matter, impreſſed by it's creator; that this motion is ſomething ſimilar to that of a pendulum, attractive and repellent. That in proportion as the parts become putrid, i. e. divided into their minima, their motion increaſes with greater fury and impetuoſity, nor can ever ſtop without immediate annihilation. By this key

we are led into the ſecrets and can eaſily account for all the inanimate productions of nature. He has manifeſted the neceſſity of a *mould* for the ſucceſſion of vegetables and animals. I now expect to make it appear that all the actions of man as well as other animals originate from *one* cauſe.

The Nerve is alone capable of ſenſation and yielding nutrition. Any branch, or even the ſmalleſt filament of a nervous fibre can receive the impreſſion of pleaſure and convey it inſtantaneouſly to the whole ſyſtem of that animal in which it is involved.

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The rapidity of the conveyance is owing to the phlogiſtic principle, of which the nerve is a conductor into the cellular tunic of all the muſcles deſtined for voluntary or involuntary motion.

It is pleaſure that inſtigates and is the primum mobile of man. Pleaſure is the only *motive* that impels him to action. As pleaſure attracts; pain, it's oppoſite, muſt repell. The ſame attractive and repulſive motion of matter which combines all the various ſubſtances of nature and compoſes their ſtructure, operates on the nerves, by it's agitations to produce every action of

every

every living being. Man is as mere a machine as any other automaton.

In his ſtate of infancy, there is not the leaſt difference manifeſt between him and any other animal: Yet alive to pleaſure, he ſucks and ſmiles. Not one in a million of our ſpecies emerge from that ſtate in any reſpect, the acceſſion of ſtrength excepted. From the ſuperior ſize, the immenſe quantity of brain and the inconcievable minuteneſs of the fibres which compoſe it, he is capable of retaining a far greater number of ideas than other animals. From the neceſſary contiguity

of

of ſuch fine filaments, an aſſociation of various ideas muſt unavoidably preſent themſelves on the ſlighteſt ſhake or vibration. He has therefore the power of calling them forth (generally) ad libitum. This is memory, a quality of the higheſt importance to ſtudious perſons. How few men are there who derive pleaſure from thinking! From hence it is evident that he who made them conſidered thinking and ſtudying as objects of mighty little conſequence to the child of man.

He has received preciſely the ſame *impreſſions* as all other animals and *no*

more.

more. All his various paſſions as they are called, ſpring from the ſame origin. We *love* that which gives pleaſure, *hate* what may decreaſe it; *hope* for the former, *fear* the latter; *envy* and are *angry* with him who obſtructs it; *friendly* and *kind* to him who adds to it: Feel *grief* at it's loſs or diminution, *joy* at it's acceſs. We are ready to ſacrifiſe a ſmall for a greater pleaſure. Strange as it may ſeem, man will inflict voluntary torments on himſelf; but pleaſure from the reſult of ſuch actions is the *motive* that cauſes them. To perſuade others that we are happy is *pride*, at whoſe ſhrine many humiliating conceſſions

and

and painful ſenſations are offered. It affords ſome the moſt ſoothing pleaſure to be thought well of by others. If we denie ourſelves in the gratification of one pleaſure, it is from the expectation of a much higher one. Not being acquainted with the *manner* in which the love of pleaſure operates in different perſons, we look on man as a jumble of inconſiſtencies. Comets are regular and Wharton plain. Were we capable of knowing the private and peculiar ſenſations of any man, there is not a ſingle action of his life which might not be nakedly expoſed in it's tract with the greateſt facility to this only motive,

Pleaſure. The hair-ſhifts worn by the Chriſtian ladies, their hunger, thirſt, watchings and ſpontaneous flagellations, with the heroic rejection of every comfort as well as every convenience of life, incloſed in mute walls, all ariſe from the mere ſelfiſh motive, of expecting to drink from rivers of *pleaſure* that flow for evermore.

NATURE is imperfect in all her manufactures: It is true, that ſhe always uſes the materials ſhe poſſeſſes in the beſt poſſible manner; chuſe them ſhe cannot, either for the human or any other race. Hence falſe conceptions,

moles

moles and monſters frequently make their appearance. It is no wonder then that there ſhould be ſome diſarrangement of, or improper particles admitted into the fineſt animal threads that ſhe is able to ſpin. This is much more frequently the caſe than is imagined. *Madneſs* is perhaps the moſt common of all diſeaſes, though ſeldom noticed, if not marked by ſome prominent extravagance. Every enthuſiaſt is mad. Obſtinacy is madneſs. This increaſes the difficulty of accounting for the complicated actions of mankind. It militates not the leaſt againſt our principle, viz. That there is but

one motive which touches and ſets to work every ſpring, every wheel, as well as every atom of the human engine, with all it's conſequential implex operations.

It is invidious and not to be endured, ſays the roſy divine, to compare man with brutes: Man has reaſon, an immaterial and immortal ſoul. As to the immaterial and immortal ſoul, I have nothing to do with it. With reſpect to reaſon, I humbly preſume, that every animal is entitled to lay it's claim to a portion of ſaid reaſon, which man has as little right to engroſs or

monopolize

monopolize as hunger and thirſt. Brutes are not deſtitute even of memory, the fineſt accompliſhment of man. By education ſuch powers are elicited as would looſe nothing when brought in competition with the European peaſantry, witneſs the chien ſavant of Paris. What is man without education? By ſevere diſcipline, dogs and monkies have been taught to perform all the manœuvres of a ſiege and the operations of a campaign with the niceſt preciſion: Yet theſe are looked on as the moſt extraordinary efforts of human proweſs. A horſe has been taught to come off winner at every game of

cards he plaid: Yet this is thought the higheſt poſſible attainment of human knowledge and ſkill. They have not indeed ſo often the opportunities of obtaining a polite and liberal education as men. In point of memory, reflexion, or juſtneſs of thinking, they ſeem very little behind hand with the generality of modern Africans. My dog is a great dreamer of dreams, and I preſume, ſome other dog may interpret them as well as any Egyptian fortune-teller. We have little reaſon to doubt that every animal has a method of communicating it's ſcanty ideas, though we underſtand not their language,

guage, nor are ſufficiently acquainted with their channels of conveyance. Man having more copious ideas, requires a more copious language. From the vibratory motion of the brain are all thoſe ideas exantlated. Images of things are painted on the retina or medullary expanſion of the optic nerve. Signs of theſe images are impreſſed by words on the auditory nerve. Every other nerve is open to ſenſation, or the ſenſe of feeling: Conſequently every atom of a living being (the excrementitions and indurated parts excepted) is capable of recieving pleaſure.

The doctrine of an immaterial and immortal ſpirit, coupled by tiny bands, joined to, or inhabiting a material ſubſtance, would never have been admitted, had it not ſoothed the pride, and tickled the ridiculous vanity of man. The divinae particula aurae fabulaeque manes have been diſmiſſed with ſupercilious contempt or retained as a ſtanding jeſt by our wiſe fore-fathers. The Jewiſh Legiſlator, though he claimed a divine miſſion, has not, through the whole pentateuch, hazarded the ſlighteſt hint of this immaterial gueſt, or even of a future ſtate. A certain proof that the Almighty did not think

think it a neceſſary article of an human creed. It is rather too abſurd for a philoſopher to attempt it's ſerious refutation.

We have already demonſtrated that there can be but *one* immaterial being. Grant another to exiſt, horrible atheiſm is the native, neceſſary and unavoidable reſult. If man requires the poſſeſſion of an immaterial ſoul, there is no other animal, whoſe claim is not as indiſputably valid. It is wonderful that Chriſtians ſhould embrace a notion which eradicates their fundamental doctrines, and involves them in obſcurity

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and confuſion. They declare the connexion between the two ſexes A crying ſin; unleſs ſanctified by clerical authority: Yet allow that the deity is always prepared to plunge a ready-made ſoul into the uterus of a whore, as well as of an honeſt woman. He muſt therefore countenance and be even a partaker of this wicked crime againſt himſelf. Souls cannot breed, being a ſort of hermaphrodites. Infundendo creantur, creando infunduntur. The point ſeems not perfectly ſettled by the deepeſt meta-phyſicians, nor adjuſted quite to the ſatisfaction of the graveſt theologues. Whether ſouls were made

before-hand

before-hand to wait naked and ſhivering for their clothing, or created immediately for the inſtant purpoſe, purſuant to the inclination of the good folks in their frolics and conformable to their temporary and deſultory vagaries. Nor is it yet agreed, whether ſaid ſoul falls into ruins with the duſt of it's companion, or has elaſtricity ſufficient to ſkip from it's confinement, and leaving it's old friend in the lurch, ſurvive the body, without quitting the environs of the church-yard. Theſe indeed are great myſteries, and worthy the agitation of thoſe brains whoſe thoughts they have engroſſed.

HAS the ſupreme being diſplayed a ſimilar conduct in any of the reſt of his works? We ſee, in them all, perfect wiſdom operating invariably by *one* ſimple cauſe. Can we ſuppoſe him capable of mingling ſuch an heterogeneous chaos of perplexed cauſes and inadequate effects in one inſtance only, to gratifie human pride and folly?

THERE is more or leſs reſemblance of *diſpoſition* as well as perſon in all children to their reſpective parents. Is this owing to the immaterial ſpirit? The ſoul muſt be very awkwardly ſituated in a variety of caſes, to be ſo much

much affected by it's covering. It ought ſurely to maintain it's power of thinking, independent of the adjuſtment or fortuitous concourſe of a few material particles.

If man has a ſoul, we muſt not heſitate in acknowledging that every vegetable has one and every magnet alſo: That the phlogiſtic principle and nature are intelligent beings. From ſuch a principle there is no end to monſtrous and abſurd deductions. The very expreſſion *immaterial ſoul* is the moſt groſs and unſufferable reflexion on his creator. He leaves cauſes to produce (to

him) their well known and certain effects. Interference is inconſiſtent with perfect preſcience. What ſhould we determine of that bungling workman, who having finiſhed a clock, obſerved that the daily touch of his finger was requiſite to aſcertain the continuance of it's proper motions?

An immaterial ſpirit in man! The broad throat of credulity muſt feel ſome difficulty in gulping down ſuch atumid opinion. Reaſons ſufficient may be aſſigned why the vulgar herd received it. But that wiſe men, accuſtomed to thinking and ratiocination ſhould adopt it,

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is truly aſtoniſhing. That, being taken on truſt, it ſhould be defended with ſo much pertinaceous perſeverance by a man of ſuch genius, learning and pointed acumen as our brother Hakim. I bowed and replied. We cannot be ignorant of the forcible bent the fibres of the brain muſt receive from the prejudices of education. How difficult is it for a man to reject a notion which from his earlieſt years he has been taught to believe as an inconteſtible truth. Yet, as I am fully convinced, I frankly own my error. I readily and ſincerely recant the fooliſh notion of the immateriality of the ſoul of man.

As his immortality has no manner of connexion with it, I truſt ye will allow me to perſiſt in the belief of a future ſtate.

UNDOUBTEDLY, replied Cnephen, if it is a truth, we will endeavour to furniſh you with every poſſible argument to confirm your faith. If it is *not* A truth, it muſt be given up with other prejudices. Let our next converſation be on that ſubject.

If you pleaſe, ſaid Phtharras, as we are now prepared, would it not be more proper, previouſly to deliver our ſen-

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timents on the Greek teſtament, as we promiſed our brother to do, after a careful and un-impaſſioned peruſal, which we have now finiſhed.

You are certainly right, ſaid Cnephen. As you and I ſo perfectly agree in opinion, I hope you will be kind enough to impart it. I will afterwards endeavour to ſettle the other point and diſcuſs the doctrine of a future ſtate.

I am,

my Lord,

your's ſincerely,

T. M.

EPISTLE the TENTH.

My Lord,

MARCH 27, 1752.

WE have peruſed, ſays Phtharras with inexpreſſible pleaſure, your friend's treatiſe on the authenticity of divine revelation. Our amiable and noble brother has exerted the utmoſt ſtrength of thought and reaſoned with ſuch exquiſite accuracy and preciſion as is very unuſual with Chriſtian writers. He has choſen the firmeſt baſis, *human teſtimony*. His ſuper-ſtructure is erected with ſuch cautious exactitude,

that

that all his arguments riſe without the leaſt intervening flaw, and are perfectly concluſive: Every inference is juſt and irrefragable, all his deductions fair and undeniable. (I need not ſay with what fervor my heart glowed in attending to ſo juſt an eulogium on your Lordſhip's production, extorted from a Jew.) His proofs of divine revelation from the pſalms are new and forcible. It is certainly extraordinary that a man of ſuch ferocious diſpoſition and ſcanty education ſhould produce a work of piety never equalled by any pen: Supernatural aſſiſtance ſeems requiſite in ſuch a caſe, if in any one.

If his *bſias* is firm, he has fully eſtabliſhed the authenticity of divine revelation. On this foundation we muſt join iſſue. If the foundation is bad, this noble edifice muſt fall to the ground. *Human teſtimony* is certainly the moſt valid and inconteſtible. "If a man of integrity imparts to me the relation of a fact, of which he had a competent knowledge and can have no temptation to deceive; I muſt neceſſarily yield my aſſent to his aſſertion." If, as your friend juſtly obſerves, we allow other perſons to have their ſenſes as well as ourſelves, five thouſand people could not be deceived in knowing whether

their

their hunger was ſatisfied with five loaves and two fiſhes. Nor could ſix hundred thouſand men be ignorant of the fall of their daily manna, or that their parching thirſt was quenched by the guſhing waters ſtruck miraculouſly from a rock. All this muſt be acknowledged. Yet certainly it would not be amiſs to enquire into the authority of the vouchers, by whom and in what manner theſe facts were conveyed.

The hiſtory of Matthew is wrote in a plain familiar manner, recording ſpeeches which he heard and deſcribing actions of which he was an eye-witneſs: He

manifeſts

manifeſts himſelf to be a man of abilities well adapted to his work, a man of integrity, who could have no intereſt nor intention to deceive. Such a narrative would have invaded the heart with irreſiſtible evidence, had there been *no other* written and the following paſſages expunged, viz: The two firſt chapters, which to ſay the truth, do not ſeem to be wrote by the ſame author. The ridiculous ſtory of the pigs and devils. It is ſtrange that a man of ſuch juſtneſs of reaſoning ſhould not ſee that ſo wanton a deſtruction of the property of a few inoffenſive ruſtics was inconſiſtent with his maſ-

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ter's character. Add alſo the monſtrous paſſage, that at the crucifixion, many bodies of the ſaints aroſe from their tombs, went into the holy city and appeared unto many. This is the only book wrote originally in Syriac. All the others made their firſt appearance in Greek.

MARK was an un-educated fiſherman, as ſuch he writes; without judgment or taſte: His ſtyle is ſo peculiarly nauſeous, that we can ſcarce read a ſentence without diſguſt. He undoubtedly was the *firſt* writer. A great part of his narrative has been digeſted and

embelliſhed

embelliſhed by Matthew. This excites ſome ſuſpicion of the latter.

LUKE was a phyſician. It is no wonder then that he ſhould be ſo elegant a writer and well acquainted with the finer feelings of the human heart. It is impoſſible to read the parables he has recorded without the tendereſt emotions. Tho' omitted by the two former, they reflect the higheſt honor on his maſter. This evangeliſt wrote not from autopſy but hearſay, about ſixty years afterwards: This diminiſhes his credit. There are alſo ſome ſtarts and flaſhes which plainly develope a ſpice

of inſanity in this amiable author. Such as an account of the miraculous conceptions of John and Jeſus, and of many other things moſt certainly believed, &c. of which we may take farther notice in our remarks on his other treatiſe and in ſumming up the evidence.

If the writings of John had been ſuppreſſed, it would have been no loſs to the Chriſtian cauſe. He deals wholly in the marvellous and all his miracles are tinctured with ſomething more miraculous. He begins with aſſerting that his maſter was God and created

all

all things. When he aſſumed the nature of man, his firſt miracle was to make wine of water for the uſe of men who were already ſufficiently drunk, (methuſthoſi). It was *better* than any they had drank before. In the idle ſtory of Betheſda's pool, the lame man, who muſt have been convinced of the vanity of his expectations in one year, is confined in the ſame place for *thirty-eight* years before he receives his cure, to render the matter more incredible. His account of the blind man is as unneceſſarily circumſtantial as diſguſtingly tedious. Lazarus comes forth from his tomb with his arms and legs *ſtill*

bound. If all his maſter's actions were related, the *whole* world would not contain the books.

THE other treatiſe of Luke poſſeſſes the ſame pleaſing traits of a fine genius, high accompliſhments and a moſt excellent heart. The ſymptoms of derangement are alſo ſtrongly marked as—in the ruſhing wind and gift of tongues—in intereſting the ſupreme being in the deciſion of a lot—in making him interfere by ſtriking two perſons dead, for reſerving part of their property.—In concealing the ſound of the voice from the companions of Saul,

and

and many other inſtances which will occur to the reader. He is in his own element when a deſcriptive painter, or in delineating thoſe exquiſite touches which penetrate and ſhake every fibre of the heart. Such are the parables: the orations of his beloved friend Paul and even of his antagoniſt Tertullus. They are maſter-pieces of art and nature. What credit, he, with the other evangeliſts, is entitled to and for a view of the reſt of the writers, I refer to our brother Cnephen, who will ſum up the evidence with his uſual preciſion and the exertion of abilities perfectly equal to ſuch a taſk.

After ſome deſultory converſation, by which I plainly perceived that I gained no ground, I declined offering any thing further. Interruption of him that ſpeaks is unknown to us. Silence enſuing, Cnephen thus addreſſed us.

The fourteen epiſtles of Paul are the effuſions of a heated imagination and enthuſiaſtic heart. When once a man regards himſelf as the peculiar favorite of the deity, there is nothing he is not capable of believing or writing. He was not deficient in natural or acquired abilities. In point of doctrine, he is too full of himſelf to reaſon juſtly. For

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the ſame reaſon, he ſcorns to prove any doubtful aſſertion. He is the apoſtle of the gentiles—I magnifie *my* office—it is *my* goſpel—If an angel from heaven ſhould preach any other than *my* goſpel, let him be accurſed. This is a compendious mode of ſettling matters. Peter he withſtood to the face, becauſe—he was to blame. Yet this Peter, though an illiterate fiſherman, wrote as well and as much, if not more in character than Paul or any of the other pen-men. The ſecond epiſtle to the opulent Corinthians ſhews the ſtrongeſt diſplay of Paul's reaſoning powers: It is the moſt complete and

artful

artful piece of mendicancy that was ever produced.

THE intention of James is to call the attention of Chriſtians from the high-flown fancies of Paul to the ſevereſt practice of moral duties.

PETER owns that there are ſome things in Paul's writings *hard to be underſtood*. Can ſuch things be a *divine revelation*.

JOHN is the ſame man in his epiſtles as in his goſpel. It is *this* diſciple that gives *this* teſtimony and we know that *his* teſtimony is true. We muſt take every thing upon truſt that *he* ſays.

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THE epiſtle of Jude is too inſignificant for notice. It is beyond meaſure aſtoniſhing that Chriſtians ſhould retain as canonical ſuch a book as the Apocalypſe. The ebullitions of ſavageneſs and revenge, too common to the Jew, burſt forth here in farraginous ſtreams of abſurdities and nonſenſe. The ſtars fall to the earth like untimely figs ſhaken from the tree. Blood riſes to the horſes bridles.—There is war in heaven, an earthquake *there* and great hail.—Thunders and voices and roarings and plagues, famine and ſores and phials of wrath.—The third part of the ſea, earth, moon, and ſun are ſtruck.

Excepting

Excepting twelve thouſand Jews of each tribe, all nations at laſt turned into hell, that the ſmoke of their torment may aſcend for ever and ever.

THAT which is revealed by the deity we might at leaſt expect to be plain and intelligible. To call that a revelation which no man can underſtand is monſtrous. To ſet men a hunting after the number 666 is curious, and to pronounce him bleſſed only who explains that which has no meaning, is ſtill more ſo. But enough of this.

Now let us examine the evidence of *human teſtimony* for the contents of this teſtament.

A miracle is no proof of any thing. Many actions may be performed by others which we cannot account for. The tricks of jugglers, however ſtrange, no one can admit as a proof of facts. A *real* miracle is a contradiction in terms, incompatible with the immutability of the deity. When a *real* miracle appears, we may juſtly expect to ſee the ſtars clattering to the earth like un-ripe figs.

PROPHESIES are inadmiſſible as a proof of any fact. They pre ſuppoſe divine inſpiration, which we have already ſhewn to be a mere ens rationis.

A voice from heaven is no proof of any thing, eſpecially when delivered in ſuch ambiguous ſounds, that ſome ſaid it articulated—this is my beloved ſon; others, that an angel ſpoke; others, that it thundered.

From human teſtimony we may collect the following indubitable facts, viz. That Jeſus Chriſt was the moſt truly, amiable, and exalted character that ever exiſted. That he had the moſt extenſive knowledge of the heart of man. That he was endued with wiſdom ſuperior to any of the human race. That he manifeſted the moſt tender and

effuſive

effuſive benevolence, the moſt unfeigned and diſintereſted philanthropy. He highly excells the Egytian Hermes, the Jewiſh Moſes, the Chineſe Confucius and the Grecian Socrates. No man ever ſpake like this man. His aſtoniſhed countrymen might well aſk whence hath this man theſe things? Is not this the carpenter's ſon?

His character is indeed a perfect one, excepting in the few ſubſequent particulars. Some little burſts of iraſcibity were betrayed in oh, generation of vipers, &c. Theſe ſymptoms he entirely maſtered, and at the latter end

of his life, in the moſt trying circumſtances wholly ſuppreſſed them. If he did not always maintain a ſevere regard to the property of others, it was becauſe as Luke ſaid, he conſidered himſelf as *Lord of all.* He undoubtedly believed what he taught of himſelf. When his countrymen told him their reaſon for ſtoning him, viz. "becauſe "thou being a man makeſt thyſelf equal "to God;" he offers not a word to undeceive them, but is forced to work a miracle for his eſcape. That he was miſtaken may be proved from his own words, in more inſtances than one, particularly his prophecy that the general

conflagration

conflagration ſhould ſucceed the deſtruction of Jeruſalem *immediately*. *So* all his followers underſtood him, and *ſo* all his apoſtles preached.

He claimed a pre-exiſtent ſtate (if there is any meaning in words) and declared that he was able by his own power, to raiſe himſelf from the dead. The truth of his peculiar doctrines depends on that ſingle fact. *That* of a *future ſtate* reſts ſolely on *his* authority and can be alone aſcertained by his reſurrection.

An object of ſuch prodigious magnitude, as the endleſs felicity or endleſs torments of all mankind requires the

moſt indiſputable evidence, the moſt inconteſtible and plenary proofs of the only fact by which ſuch a doctrine can be confirmed. Is his reſurrection from the tomb ſufficiently authenticated by human teſtimony? If not, he is intitled to no more credit than any other man.

In a matter of ſuch inexpreſſible moment, every human being has a right to claim undeniable proofs and the moſt irrefragable evidence. We ſmile at the teſtimony of the ſoldiers with reſpect to what paſſed while they were aſleep. Yet whether he was ſtolen, or ſtole away himſelf at *midnight*, it was certainly

a ſeaſon not ſo well choſen to afford ſatisfaction, by increaſing the publicity of the fact.

THE firſt evidence is a woman who thought herſelf under the greateſt obligations to him. From her ſtrong attachment to and conſtant attendance upon him in his life-time, one would think that ſhe muſt inſtantaneouſly recogniſe him; yet miſtook him for a gardener, whom it is not probable that ſhe had ever ſeen.

THE next is the negative teſtimony of two of his own diſciples. They went not into the monument, nor ſaw

their maſter, but the linen clothes wrapped up and the angel who rolled away the ſtone, ſitting *in* the tomb. Why an angel ſhould interfere in a caſe which we were previouſly told required none of his aſſiſtance, or of what uſe his evidence could be, while confined to that narrow ſpot, it is not eaſy to determine. John, according to his cuſtom of aggrandiſing miracles, has placed *two* angels, one at the head and one at the foot of the tomb to ſit there, to do nothing and to no purpoſe.

The next evidence is given by two perſons who were intimately acquainted

with

with him a week before; yet after his reſurrection, their eyes were *holden* (for what reaſon is amazing) and they knew him not. After much converſation, being deſirous of retaining him, he immediately vaniſhed out of their ſight. *Then* they knew him.

THE next and laſt teſtimony is that of his eleven domeſtics, who had been hitherto neglected. The doors being ſhut, he appeared amongſt them. It is difficult to ſay, with what intent this miracle was performed. He breathed on them that they might receive the holy ghoſt.

After all this evidence, attended to by thoſe on the ſpot, who were eye-witneſſes to his deeds, when alive; and ear-witneſſes to his words, the hiſtorian frankly confeſſes that *ſome* believed and *ſome* believed *not*.

Luke indeed aſſerts that he was ſeen on earth for forty days, and then received by a cloud, and his *body* carried up to heaven. Paul alſo ſays that he was ſeen by five hundred brethren at once, moſt of whom at his time of writing, were living. This ſeems not very probable, it being between ſixty and ſeventy years after, when theſe contemporary writers gave their account.

Is

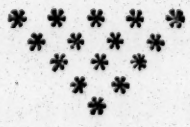
Is this SUFFICIENT Evidence for PROOF of ſuch a FACT to us (and to all men) at ſuch a diſtance of time?

I am,

my Lord,

your's ſincerely,

T. M.



Epistle the Eleventh.

My Lord,

May 7, 1752.

We have paid, ſaid Phtharras, the moſt ſedulous attention brother Hakim, to the arguments you have offered in favor of a future ſtate. They may be divided into two claſſes. the firſt, are drawn from a preconcieved knowledge of deity, his intentions and the manner in which he *muſt* act. As we have already demonſtrated that any knowledge of him or his conduct is un-attainable; all attempts to prove any thing from ſuch

ſuch principles are irrelevant, futilous and unfounded. Thoſe of the other claſs prove a great deal too much, ſuch as the imperfection of man, the untimely ſtoppage of his progreſs and the unequal diſtribution of happineſs, miſery, &c. Theſe are equally forcible in favor of the wild aſs and the aſs in a ſand cart, each individual of the infinite ſhoals of ſmall fiſh, who are daily ſwallowed by their deſpots, and conſequentially allow every inſect, alſo an indiſputable claim to immortality. Our brother Cnephen will, I doubt not, with his uſual diſcernment and preciſion ſet theſe matters in a clear light.

HAVING

HAVING ſaid every thing that has been offered on the ſubject, not omitting thoſe arguments of the author of the Night-thoughts, which he fondly thought new and un-anſwerable,—— I made no reply.

CNEPHEN then thus addreſſed us. Of all the follies incident to humanity *that* of prying into futurity is the moſt predominant and univerſal. Prophets, ſoothſayers, and fortune-tellers have been ever held in the higheſt eſtimation; ſought after by kings with greedineſs and liſtened to with anxious ſuſpence, not even by the incredulous, without avidity.

No wonder that the doctrine of a future ſtate found eaſy admittance and kind foſtering; as it alarmed the curioſity and aggrandized the moſt favorite notion—the Dignity of Human Nature. Let us examine it's pretenſions to reality by it's analogy with thoſe works of the deity and nature, which actually preſent themſelves to our view.

MANKIND are ſubject to the ſame law with all other animals. They are furniſhed with powers, (like the reſt) adapted to their peculiar ſituation. The hand, the ſpeedy communication of their ideas and ſocial connexions are

adequate

adequate to the deſign for which they were formed—to cultivate the earth and promote vegetable ſucceſſion—to preclude the intruſion of any one ſpecies of animals on the reſt; by whoſe too rapid multiplication, if not impeded, they would ſoon engroſs the earth to themſelves. Placed at the head of the creation, to rule and deſtroy at pleaſure, like other deſpots, he pays dear for his pre-eminence of rank. The ſufferings of mankind, in number and magnitude, exceed the ſufferings of any other ſpecies. Man is not leſs ſubject to diſeaſes than any of the reſt. They are no leſs ready to deſtroy one another than

wantonly to deal deſtruction to inferior animals. Man ſeems not to have received any *particular* favors, ſavoring of partiality. What does every hiſtory preſent us with, but a mournful catalogue of the follies and miſeries of mankind?

NATURE is too imperfect in her operations not to fail frequently in her efforts to form ſo complicated a ſtructure, ſo finely organized a machine as man. More than one third of the ſpecies periſh under two years of age by natural infirmities. Are they to be raiſed from the tomb, to give an ac-

count

count of their actions, before they could diſcriminate between good and evil?

Not one in a million of thoſe who arrive at maturity, either ſpend their time to better purpoſe or are much more enlightened than the drivelling infant: They eat, drink, work, ſleep, increaſe their ſpecies. If commanded, they murther as many of them as they can. Is a review of ſuch actions and ſuch a ſameneſs an important object? Would not all the tricks of thoſe much more cunning animals, the larger baboons, particularly the Pongo and Cynocephalus, be more worthy of reviſion

before a future tribunal? There is certainly more variety in the conduct of the latter.

A great part of our fellow-creatures now indeed lay out their whole lives in the momentous buſineſs of buying, ſelling and getting gain. This to be ſure is a matter that too well demands the attention of deity, not to call them out of their graves to give an account of profit and loſs. What importance is a man of to himſelf?

OTHERS, the moſt uſeleſs of all, live on the product of land, conveyed to them by inheritance. In proportion

as

as they attain power and titles, they become more miſchevious and oppreſſive of thoſe below them.

Some few cultivate their thinking powers. Like us, my brethren, they muſt confeſs that the time ſpent in ſtudy is paſt as idly and to as little purpoſe as that in ploughing, weaving, or hunting.

Man, if he eſcapes the ravage of diſeaſe and the ſword of his fellow-men; arrives at maturity, then gradually deſcends to his original ſtate of impotency, ideotcy and infancy. Thus a conſtant circulation is maintained.

If nature appreciated mankind as much as they do themſelves, would ſo many millions of millions, in the prime of life, have been deſtined to cut each other's throats, and to inflict the utmoſt poſſible tortures on one another? The earth is ſoaked with human blood, the ſea is paved with human ſkulls.

As man received his exiſtence on *no terms*, it is impoſſible that he ſhould be an accountable being to him that made him. Were he in a ſtate of *probation*, it was at leaſt requiſite that he ſhould have ſome notice of it. Can it be

ſuppoſed that the deity would take an advantage of the unavoidable ignorance of his creatures *here*, to torment them for ever *hereafter*? Man cannot *be* or *act* otherwiſe than it was intended he ſhould, by him who made him. To reward or puniſh him for any action would be equally unjuſt. From the relation of man to man in ſoc ety are theſe ideas very improperly transferred to his creator. It is highly juſt that virtue ſhould be rewarded and vice puniſhed by *men*. To expect a reward from him to whom we owe every thing and even our being is as abſurd as preſumptuous. By a parity of reaſoning,

to

to expect puniſhment from him who is the cauſe of all cauſes and effects, is equally groundleſs.

What conſiſtency, or what analogy with the other works of God is there in raiſing men from the dead? Nature (like her author) is uniform, conſtant and ſteady in her purſuits. She exerts un-remitting power in increaſing and diffuſing animal life as faſt as poſſible. She withdraws her attention and favors from thoſe who decline into the vale of years and become unfit for promoting her darling purpoſe procreation. Men and women when old ſhe reſigns

to all the horrors of impotent repinings and uſeleſs murmurs.

When the organization is deſtroyed, the parts are reſolved into the elements of which they were compoſed, and the animal is, as if it had never been. The ſame elements continue their motion, and may form the ſtructure of a thouſand other animals of the ſame ſpecies. To reſuſcitate the ſame man is impractica-ble. To ſupply this glaring deficiency and to render ſo palpable an abſurdity poſſible, the un-meaning words, im-mortal ſoul and immaterial ſpirit were invented and thus an imaginary con-

ſciouſneſs, diſtinct from organization, eſtabliſhed.

It has been thought by ſome ſuperficial reaſoners, that the notion of a future ſtate is a ſtrong reſtraint on the criminal actions of mankind and a powerful incentive to moral duties. Whatever ſpeculative men may think when they perſuade themſelves to believe *that* which they wiſh to prove, there is not the leaſt reaſon for ſuch a ſuppoſition. Man, in an active ſtate, on the eve of a crime, gives himſelf little concern about futurity. Every object appears minute in proportion to

it's

it's diſtance. The halter, or the rack are not ſufficiently near to ſuperſede the motive excited by his wants. Puniſhments in a future ſtate are too far off to have the feebleſt influence on human conduct. We ſee this confirmed by the univerſal practice of men. The moſt flagitious crimes have been perpetrated by thoſe who made the ſtrongeſt profeſſions of ſuch belief. The moſt exalted characters, the moſt ſeverely and perfectly virtuous are found among thoſe who had no idea of a future ſtate.

THE fact is, that our maker has made ſufficient proviſion for every de-

ficiency of man, without any ſuch proſpect. As he was intended for a ſocial being, the *impreſſion* of PITY is much deeper on *his* heart than on that of any other animal. His own wants are no ſooner ſupplied, than he feels the wants of others, and pants to ſupply them. As men grow more enlightened, the aggregate of pleaſure will increaſe and the aggregate of pain diminiſh. Co-operating with the intentions of nature; ſcience, (though like her own works) ſlowly progreſſive, is *ſtill* advancing with invincible energy. The time will come, when no man will deſignedly give pain to a fellow-creature:

When

When every man will exert his utmoſt efforts to increaſe and elevate the pleaſures of all he is connected with. Then will man enjoy every moment of his exiſtence *here* and the baſeleſs notion of a future ſtate ſink into oblivion.

I am,

my Lord,

your's ſincerely,

T. M.

EPISTLE the TWELFTH.

My Lord,

MAY 26, 1752.

ONCE for all, ſaid Phtharras, to terminate our converſations on ſuch un-important ſubjects, as we have lately been engaged in, I ſhall beg leave to deliver my ſentiments on religion in general. Religion and politics are the only ſubjects which are proſcribed from Lodges.

As you, brother Hakim, intend to take a tour into the Zaaide (Upper Egypt) you will there meet with much

greater wonders than you have experienced, or can poſſibly conceive without ocular demonſtration. Your thoughts will then be occupied with ſuch ideas of the ſplendor, magnificence, and ſeemingly ſupra-humane abilities of our antient brethren, as will totally abſorb thoſe of the mean chicanery and paltry tricks of a few artful men to ſubjugate and fleece the ignorant and credulous.

At preſent, let us take a view of the origin, increaſe and effects of religion on mankind. That religion was never deſigned for man is an axiom

to be proved with the utmoſt facility. If divine worſhip had been inſtituted by, or received the ſanction of the deity, a *rule* might have been expected and ſuch a rule as was *intelligible*, *invariable* and *univerſal*. Every man has an equal claim to the knowledge of it; whether a native of Jeruſalem, Japan, or Britain. I do not draw my arguments from any ſuppoſed knowledge of the ſupreme, but from the moſt unequivocal authority, the analogy of all his works. Among a cloud of inconteſtible evidences of this ſort, I ſhall only offer *one*, which is ſufficiently deciſive.

God has left nothing of real importance to our own diſcretion: Not even the preſervation of the individual or ſpecies.

On the contrary, we ſee that he has fixed and determined adequate cauſes to produce every deſigned effect. His goodneſs, as well as his power and wiſdom are manifeſted in the proviſion he has made for all the wants of his creatures. He has alſo deſcended to the moſt minute attention, even to the trivial *conveniences* of the animal creation. By an admirable mechaniſm, he has impowered us to reſtrain at

pleaſure,

pleaſure, the unavoidable urgency of the calls of nature for a conſiderable time, without injury to the organized frame. If then he has conſulted our eaſe in the ſmalleſt matters that reſpect the *enjoyment of our exiſtence*; can it be ſuppoſed that he would leave *eternal* happineſs or miſery to our eventual conduct?

WERE a matter of ſuch importance as the *right* method of divine worſhip left to every man's contrivance, every man would miſs of it: This is diametrically oppoſite to the conduct of deity towards us in every inſtance.

The

The plain inference is, that religion or divine worſhip was never expected or requeſted from us. Our own ſilly wiſhes to foreſee future events have led us into this wretched labyrinth, 'till we can liſten with ſome degree of compoſure, to all the rant of enthuſiaſm.

TAKE a ſurvey of the various methods of worſhip among men: They cannot be all right. They may and muſt be all wrong. Compare the worſhip of Oſiris, Oroſmanes, Jupiter, or any of the many thouſands of the fanciful deities of the antients, with that of the more modern ones, of Jews,

Mahometans,

Mahometans, and Chriſtians. It would be hard to ſay which had the advantage. They all preſumed on a knowledge of the *attributes* of God, and paid their tribute of adoration to the various reſpective emanations, under different ſymbols and alluſions. The three laſt confine themſelves to the worſhip of the eſſence of God, as *one* being.

CHRISTIANS indeed ſurpaſs all others in their contracted notions. They proſcribe all other ſects but their own. The Catholics conſign to eternal damnation each individual of mankind who is out of the pale of their own com-

munion.

munion. The Church of England aſſerts that the doctrines of the Romiſh church are damnable. The Preſbyterians look on the worſhip of the Engliſh church as idolatrous. The independants pity the poor *loſt* Preſbyterians. The Baptiſts will allow no man a chance for heaven who has not been plunged over head and ears in water after the confeſſion of his faith. The Quaker would not willingly admit the poſſibility of that man's ſalvation who can ſit with his hat off in a place of worſhip. The worſhip of that ſect is indeed the moſt rational, being performed in ſilence. You ſee many of our hiero-

glyphics

glyphics repreſent prieſts with their finger on their lips, ſhewing that our forefathers countenance no other worſhip: To the Quakers is owing the important addition of the broad-brimmed hat.

THE Mahometans, by far more numerous than the profeſſors of any other religion, exclude all others indiſcriminately from the favor of God and confine it to the true male believers, women having no ſouls. Every vere adeptus, or real enthuſiaſt, in all religions, engroſſes it to himſelf and with calm compoſure, permits the whole race of

mankind to walk the downward road to everlaſting miſery. Mr. Perkins, a famous and voluminous Engliſh divine, confeſſes with admirable ſatisfaction, he has no doubt that there are infinite numbers of children of a ſpan long in hell, ſuffering eternal torments for the tranſgreſſion of the firſt man. Are all theſe in the right road to heaven; or which of the travelling companies muſt I join to arrive *there?* Has my kind maker given me eyes that I might not bruiſe my foot againſt a ſtone, yet enveloped me in total darkneſs with regard to ſuch momentous matters as religion and the right me-

thod

thod of divine worſhip. This is beyond all meaſure ſtrange, if he intended religion for man, or that men ſhould be worſhippers of himſelf.

To trace all the above ſtreams up to their firſt ſource. In the firſt ages, when mankind were few in number, fear ſtrongly operated upon them. Frequent accidents from inexperience and the awful ſcenes of nature, for which they could not account, increaſed thoſe fears. They muſt of conſequence be ſubject for ſome ages to a conſtant train of alarms, which would generate a moſt pliable credu-

lity. In ſuch a ſtate, it was no wonder that occaſion was given to them who were more artful than the generality to take an advantage of their ignorance and apprehenſions.

They inſinuated that ſuperior beings to whom they owed their exiſtence and all the comforts of life, were mighty angry with their conduct and determined to puniſh them. Such a denunciation would naturally lead them to enquire whether theſe ſagacious perſons knew why ſaid Gods were angry with them, and by what means they might be rendered pro-

pitious

pitious. The crimes were neglect of the Gods and neglect of the prieſts. Then was the field opened for deſigning men to diſplay their abilities and undertake to mediate between the ſuperior powers and the ſuppoſed criminal race of mortals. Theſe men were ſtyled prieſts and ſtill retain the title, the ſelf aſſumed prerogative and all due veneration. It was too great a temptation to acquire power and wealth, that the ſucceſſion ſhould ever ceaſe, or their claim be called in queſtion. Well might the poet ſay, Primus in orbe deos fecit timor.

Such was the origin of religion. It is needleſs to explain it's various appearances, purſue it's path, which might be eaſily done and the uſeleſs labor be confirmed by hiſtory. It's inevitable influence our eyes are no ſtrangers to. We have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us it's wonderful effects. All men in all ages and in all nations (Philoſophers excepted) have been dupes to the artifices and chicanery, or enſlaved by the idaeal yet highly venerated power of the prieſts. The brave Romans who deſpiſed danger and ſcouted death, durſt not engage

in

in battle without a favorable omen from one of theſe holy men. The very dirt of *our* temple was ſacred; that if one of the tribe of Levi mix'd a little of it in water and an unchaſte woman taſted it, her belly would ſwell and her thigh would rot.

THE *effects* of all religions are preciſely the ſame.—To incarcerate the human intellect and to increaſe the miſeries of human life. Juſt was the exclamation of the poet before the appearance of Chriſtianity, Tantum religio potuit ſuadere malorum.

As

As the profeſſors of *that* religion have made the boldeſt and moſt unqualified pretenſions to it's influence in humanizing the heart and meliorating the morals of men; it cannot be amiſs to examine the juſtneſs of this claim.

TAKE a view of the ſtate of man for the firſt twelve or fourteen centuries, under the Roman Biſhop or Grecian partriarch. What can we find but ignorance the moſt dark and ſtupid, the belief of poſitive aſſertions enforced, enquiry prohibited, conſciences ſhackled, inextinguiſhable quar-

rels

rels and animoſities raging, deſtruction and carnage ravaging the earth.

Look at Chriſtians on their croiſade, to which, by the way, they owe the little knowledge they acquired from the Arabian heathens and the cultivation of which they now ſo inglorioufly boaſt of. Look at the Chriſtian Spaniards in South America: At the Chriſtian Engliſh in Aſia or Africa. Are you ſatisfied? Can you find any traces of religious excellence in their conduct. Are the Jews and even thoſe who profeſs their own religion, who do not chuſe

to

to believe that which is incredible to be tortured and burned alive to diſplay the goodneſs of their religion? As to knowledge, all attempts to ſpread the effects of ſcientific reſearches were quaſhed. Galileo, in his old age was obliged to recant and acknowledge the greatneſs of the ſin of believing his eyes. Was not a horrid death denounced and executed on a Chriſtian Biſhop for daring to aſſert that he believed the earth moved?

The fact is, that viſible effects Chriſtians have aſcribed to a cauſe

which

which had no manner of concern in their production. It was the intention of nature that ſcience ſhould be gradually tho' ſlowly progreſſive. Mankind muſt neceſſarily be more enlightened every century. It is owing to this increaſe of knowledge, that their hearts grow ſofter towards each other and that they feel a greater reluctance to give pain. This, ſo far from being the offspring of Chriſtianity, has been more obſtructed and retarded by it than by any other cauſe.

We ſhall now conſider the peculiar effects of religion, confining ourſelves

ſelves to Chriſtianity; tho' it muſt be confeſſed that all other religions are adequate cauſes and have invariably produced the ſame effects. Their *doctrines* and *practice* are exactly the ſame. The *firſt* is (for they *all* terminate in this). That the only way to pleaſe God is to make ourſelves as miſerable as poſſible. The *ſecond*, that in proportion as religion ſpreads, human miſery increaſes.

That the *firſt* is the fundamental doctrine of Chriſtianity, is evident from the declaration of it's author. Whoever *hates* not his father, mother

and

and even his own life for my ſake, cannot be my diſciple. The ſame notion has been ſtrenuouſly maintained and with all imaginable energy inculcated by every Chriſtian teacher. Faſts, watchings, ſelf-denial, mortifications, ſuppreſſion of deſires the moſt innocent and natural, glorying in tribulations and perſecutions, abſtracted ſpeculations and voluntary puniſhments are repreſented as the only means whereby the favor of God is to be acquired.

When our great creator has ſpread our table and filled our cup, has of-

fered ſuch variety of proviſions adapted to every taſte; touch not, taſte not, handle not is the ſqueamiſh language of religion. Like wayward children, we are taught to reject the bounty of our maker and ſtarve in the midſt of plenty. How different from the ſilent yet un-erring and emphatic language of Nature.

As to the *ſecond*, that Religion has no other tendency than to the increaſe of human miſery,—we need only to open our eyes to be convinced of this truth. In their earlieſt years, children ſuffer irreparable evils

from

from conſtraint, &c. a uſeleſs attention to thoſe things which cramp their underſtanding, ſour their tempers and render them unfit for the enjoyment of life. Their hearts are poiſoned with diſguſt to thoſe of their fellow-creatures who think differently from them. To pleaſe their palates is a great crime. They muſt be taught to endure patiently.

LAZARUS had his *evil* things in this world and the rich man his *good* things: No other reaſon is given why he is comforted and the other tormented. John the divine alluding to

the inimical city Rome, prays—as ſhe has lived in delicacy and pleaſure, *ſo much* torment and ſorrow give her. The inference is obvious, viz. that the favour of the deity is only to be obtained by the voluntary wretchedneſs of his creatures. What prepoſterous, yet univerſal credulity! I was pleaſed with the ebullition of natural good ſenſe in the Engliſh boy (whoſe maſter had compelled to faſt the whole day) " People muſt be " fools to think that God Almighty " can be pleaſed with the rumbling of " my guts."

WHY are men confined in monaſteries and women in nunneries? To prevent the indulgence of ſenſual delights; as though the enjoyment of the moſt natural and indiſpenſable pleaſures were offenſive to the deity. Chaſtity, the moſt unpardonable crime in nature, is regarded as a virtue among Chriſtians, who make themſelves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's ſake.

WHERE will the madneſs of religious rage and religious impoſition terminate? Nothing can ſtop it but the progreſs of ſcience. In proportion as the influence of religion dwin-

dles, the enjoyment of life increaſes. When religion ſhall be extinct, there will be no reſtraint on the felicity of mankind, which will then be conſtantly ſpreading and abounding, purſuant to the deſign of nature and I think, may ſafely add, the author of nature.

THE *religion of nature* is a mere ens rationis. Nature knows nothing of it. Reaſon never taught it. If the deity had given it, it would have been analogous to all the reſt of his favors, *intelligible, invariable, univerſal.*

THERE is ſomething extremely ſimilar to religion among every ſpecies of

of animals. The Pongo and all of the ape kind have ſome of their tribe more ſagacious than the reſt. Such an one may be often found to harangue his fellow-creatures in full aſſembly. When he has finiſhed his chattering, which is undoubtedly as intelligible to them, as any articulate ſounds to men, they depart, wonderfully edified by his ſermon and impreſſed with an awful ſenſe of his ſuperior abilities. Whether he teaches the doctrine of a future ſtate we know not, being ſtrangers to his language; but this we know, that he is always the moſt indolent and fares better than any of the reſt.

All

All ſorts of beaſts and birds too yield a like obedience to a few of the ſame ſpecies.

Even inſects are not deſtitute of ſuch directors of conſciences. The republic of ants and the mornachy of bees give viſible proofs that they have ſome prieſts among them. Theſe exempt themſelves from toil and labour and live very much at their eaſe on the product of the induſtrious many.

I leave to our brother Cnephen, who had the honor of being a prieſt above forty years, to impart to you the infinite number of well authentica-

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ted miracles, by which the prieſthood of Oſiris was eſtabliſhed and maintained, among an enlightened and refined people for fourteen thouſand years. He will develope the whole art and myſtery of prieſthood and give you plenary ſatisfaction in thoſe matters which I have ſlightly ſketched.

What is of far more conſequence, I have the pleaſure to inform you of having prevailed with him to accompany us in our voyage up the Nile as far as the firſt cataract. He will aſſiſt you in the ſtudy of the Hiero-grammata and help you to a key to moſt

of

of the hieroglyphics you will meet with in the ruins of the various cities; of which there were once more than ſixteen thouſand in that province.

THEBES, which could once pour forth from each of her hundred gates ten thouſand fighting Men at an hour's warning, has nothing now remaining of her antient ſplendour, but thoſe indeſtructible marbles which ſtill and ever will continue the monuments, while the engraven hieroglyphics record the account of her former wealth and magnificence. In Dendera (the old Tentyris) there is yet one temple

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and the only one *entire* reared by the antient Egyptians.

You will view with aſtoniſhment and extaſy, the indeſcribable black granite obeliſks covered with hieroglyphics; the only marble that never decays. The old ſculpture has never been paralelled. The old ſtatuary ſhews what an infinite diſtance the Grecian artiſts were ever at from their maſters. The paintings ſtill freſh and perfect as much ſurpaſs every effort of the Europeans.

We intend, ſays Cnephen, to land every two or three leagues on one or

or the other ſide of the river. We ſhall find on every ſpot enough to rouze our curioſity and arreſt our attention. I never expect to return, but have made ſuch proviſion for our tour as will convince you that the old adage reſpecting the prieſthood and inſeperable from it has not been neglected QUOD VENTRI BENE SIT.

I am,

my Lord,

your's ſincerely,

T. M.

My

EPISTLE the THIRTEENTH.

My Lord,

JUNE 24, 1752.

ACCORDING to your deſire, I requeſted Phtharras to give me his opinion of Idolatry. I thought with you that ſomething very curious muſt be the reſult from a Jew on that ſubject. We have no reaſon to complain of diſappointment. He very readily complied. To manifeſt my readineſs of obliging you, with all poſſible expedition, I have tranſmitted to you the incloſed, tho' we are fully

prepared for our tour to the Upper Egypt. It will be impoſſible for you to hear from me 'till my return.

THAT *all* worſhip has been idolatrous, ſays Phtharras, is an inconteſtable fact. That there are infinite numbers of our ſpecies who have never elevated their ideas to any beings ſuperior to their parents muſt indeed be confeſſed. That a great number of nations *ſtill* exiſt in the ſame predicament is alſo true. Where the neceſſaries of life are ſcanty, or not to be acquired without difficulty and danger; *this* is univerſally the caſe.

IN

In the Southern parts of Africa, were men are obliged to conteſt every inch of ground with wild beaſts (and every day) for their nutriment; they have enough to do to provide for their ſafety and food. Theſe are all upon a par. Among ſuch, religion will never make her appearance. Such is the ſtate of infinite myriads in the greateſt part of this vaſt peninſula. A nation of European tartars are a little more refined and ſay their prayers *once* a year—to a dead horſe.

It may be fairly computed that one quarter part of our fellow-creatures

are ſtill in this ſtate. In any country were there is no property worth acquiring by artifice, prieſts never aſſemble, conſequently there is no religion.

In thoſe regions where the comforts of life are attainable with facility and men live at their eaſe, the arts and ſciences will ſoon be cultivated, property acquired and ſecured, rapine proſcribed and ſeverely puniſhed. The more ſubtle and indolent would attempt to participate of that property by artifice. To operate on the fears of men was the moſt obvious and ef-

ficacious

ficacious method. They were told, that to avert evils and enjoy the good things of this life, it was neceſſary to pay divine homage to thoſe ſuperior beings who beſtowed them. The honeſt prieſts muſt have been much puzzled for ſome ages to identifie ſuch beings.

The ſun was doubtleſs the firſt object of worſhip and has maintained his rank the longeſt. The moon could not be neglected, and the roving ſtars would come in for their reſpective ſhares. Rivers, corn and wine were intitled to their tutelary Gods. The

air, earth and ſea could not be exempted. Men, who in former times, had afforded ſingular ſervice to mankind, ſoon found a place among the reſt of the deities. Every God found a prieſt and every prieſt found a God. Thus circumſtanced were all the human race for many thouſands of years with regard to religion.

When the united exertions of philoſophers for many ages had aſcended from the diſpoſal of things to creation and the diſcovery of a *firſt cauſe*; this eſoteric doctrine was confined to the knowledge of few. From the il-

limitable

limitable power and boundleſs diſplays of wiſdom ſo apparent, a certainty was acquired of the exiſtence of one immaterial being, without beginning or end. Conſcious that no idea could be conceived of him, no endeavour was made to impart any ſuch conception. To ſuggeſt ſuch a notion to the public at large, they were ſenſible muſt be productive of the utmoſt confuſion. Un-intelligible to the generality, inimical to the prieſthood, the latter would have muſtered all *their* power and called in the civil for the deſtruction of ſuch impious wretches.

SOCRATES

SOCRATES made this attempt, for which he was held up as a ſtanding jeſt, preſented as a moſt ridiculous object upon the ſtage even among a poliſhed people and condemned to death. Many centuries after, it was the univerſal cry in a city (on a ſimilar effort) great is Diana of the Epheſians: Every one worſhips that image which *all the world* knows was let down from heaven by Jupiter. Some perſons in theſe enlightened days may perhaps *ſafely* doubt of that fact.

As ſenſible images were abſolutely neceſſary to impreſs the human heart,

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əqɪ prieſts were at no loſs for invention. They furniſhed a competent number, adapted to various taſtes, which any man might adopt according to his inclination. Grand temples were erected for their reception. Parade, ſhew ceremonies inſtituted and the important ſacred character of the prieſts energetically inculcated.

So far all things were amicably conducted. Any man might viſit his own or any other pariſh temple without reprehenſion. No one took offence at his neighbour at any ſuch matters. None ever thought of pro-

ſelyting another from the worſhip of his own God. No perſecution, no intolerance, no animoſity among brethren for their different methods of worſhip. Happy times! The increaſed power of the prieſts has refined our ſentiments more in theſe latter ages. We are now taught that every man muſt comply with the ſame mode of worſhip.

Moses had learned the eſoteric doctrines of the Egyptian maſons, as we are informed by himſelf. He was the firſt perſon who conceived the grand idea of fixing it as the baſis of a

religion

religion cemented with civil power. Circumſtances were in general favorable to the growth of his new ſtate. He doubtleſs had nothing leſs in view than to lay a foundation for univerſal monarchy. The propenſity of his people to Idolatry ſeems the only cauſe that curtailed his plan. Religion, having now aſſumed the right hand ſeat of government, laid aſide her ſubmiſſive aſpect and awful reverence of civil power; her flaming ſword was unſheathed, her true viſage appeared with all it's terrific features: Nor has ſhame been ever ſince able to force a bluſh into her cheeks, from pointing

at

at her devaſtations, tortures and carnage.

THOU ſhalt not ſuffer an Idolater to live was the command, previous to their entrance of the promiſed land. Men, women, children, and even cattle were to be butchered. *This* ſavors ſomething of human origin. In all his familiar conferences with the deity, the doctrine of a future ſtate was never revealed to this divine legiſlator. It was many ages after, e'er this important truth was diſcovered. Why God withheld it from his choſen people and Moſes his friend, is not for

us to account for. One twelfth part of his nation were ſet apart for the holy prieſthood, to teach their brethren to worſhip nothing but the unutterable tetra-grammaton.

MAHOMET purſued the ſame plan with more ſucceſs. Submit, or die was an alternative to be ſpeedily ſettled. To do him juſtice he granted life and toleration to the ſubmiſſive idolater. Every Muſſulman muſt often repeat, God is great,—God is good, &c. tho' they honeſtly confeſs that they know nothing about him.

If Idolatry had been offenſive to the deity, he could have been at no loſs to have provided means for it's prevention. Why did he permit it to continue all over the globe for ſo many thouſands of years? Had he thought fit to puniſh it, were there no more ſuitable method than to plunge the ſwords of men into the bowels of their brethren?

The fact is, that every man was, is, and muſt be neceſſarily an Idolater, if he is a worſhipper. To worſhip a being of which we have no knowledge, is as much Idolatry as to wor-

ſhip

ſhip a Hercules, a Ceres, or a Naiad. Had the ſupreme being thought proper to have been the object of worſhip, he would have beſtowed other faculties on man, or not have left him at an entire loſs with reſpect to a *rule*.

CHRISTIANS are as much Idolaters as any of the antient pagans, tho' ſuch ſevere and furious perſecutors of all Idolatry but their own. From the firſt commencement of their religion to this day they have worſhipped a man, his ſuppoſed virgin mother, ſaints, the bones of ſaints, precious relics, images, pictures, &c. With what front

can they upbraid the worſhipper of a crocodile, a cat, a monkey's tooth, or an onion?

Let us examine the tenets of thoſe who are the moſt learned and enlightened, among theſe haughty ſelf-ſufficient thinkers. They labor indeed under great, tho' voluntary diſadvantages. With contracted hearts from education, within a confined ſphere of thinking, they give themſelves little concern in attaining the knowledge of human nature, or acquainting themſelves with what mankind have been, or now are, as univerſally ſpread over

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the globe. Swoln with ſelf-importance, their main object is to arm themſelves with proofs (as they fondly conceit them) of the truth of their own religion. Whatever ſeems to militate againſt ſuch proofs is rejected with indignation. Man, whom they might know, intimately, is neglected. Inſtead of ſtudying human nature, they are ever looking after that which is not to be found. Their idaea of a deity firſt riſes to a ſchool-maſter, then to a juſtice of peace, or moral governor; at length to a patriot king. Some very elevated notions have been communicated by the writers on the attributes.

The beſt qualities (or rather the leaſt exceptionable) of man are imputed to God and the (no) idaea of *infinite* tacked to each; thus furniſhing out a monſter as prepoſterous as a centaur. Yet to *this* they bow down and worſhip. Which man is the moſt culpable idolater? He that honeſtly owns the ſtatue he carved, or the image he caſt was the creature of *his own hands*; or he that exclaims of the creature of *his own imagination*, Let all worſhip *this*.

It is true, no man ever did or ever can acquire the leaſt ſhadow of an idaea

of

of the ſupreme being: The plain inference is evident, that God never intended or expected that mankind ſhould worſhip him. All religions therefore ought to be referred to their proper origin, the brains of men. If any one came from the deity, it would bear the ſame ſtamp with all his other works and be intelligible, incorruptible, and univerſal. From the ſame premiſes may be deduced this natural conſequence, that the doctrine of a future ſtate is equally groundleſs and irrational.

That the wiſeſt of the Chriſtians have far ſurpaſſed all other ſects in abſurdity, with reſpect to their notions of deity, will appear from their own doctrines. They aſſert that God is infinitely good, a being of pure benevolence. That his only view in forming mankind was, that they might be happy. A propoſition ſo groſs and palpably falſe is a pregnant inſtance of the weakneſs of human nature. Would the happieſt man that ever lived voluntarily receive an exiſtence to paſs preciſely in the ſame manner as he did before? That God has annexed felicity to virtue and miſery to vice.

That

That as a *moral governor*, he beſtows the greateſt happineſs on thoſe who attain the higheſt degree of moral rectitude. Fine ſentiments, but unluckily there is not a word of truth in them. Our happineſs depends on the conduct of others much more than upon our own. If a man's wife, children, or friends behave in ſuch a manner as to diſtreſs him, all his virtue and moral rectitude will contribute nothing to his happineſs.

Let us ſee what a picture they draw of a being infinitely and immutably good.—Mankind are born in ſin and concieved in iniquity. From the tranſ-

greſſion

greſſion of their firſt parents they derive corruption in every power and faculty. All the imaginations of their hearts are evil, only evil and that continually. They feel a ſtrong propenſity to do every thing that may diſpleaſe their creator. The devil goes about as a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour. He, by every poſſible ſtratagem, tempts mankind to do thoſe things only which they have the ſtrongeſt inclination to perform. Being a perſonage of great ſagacity and of many thouſand years experience, he muſt have a vaſt advantage over an ignorant reptile. The world, the fleſh

and

and the devil are irreſiſtable by all the virtue and moral rectitude that ever exiſted. True! There is only one thing to ſupport man, viz. ſupernatural divine grace. How is this to be attained? Only by prayer to an *immutable* being. There are no people on earth who have an excluſive right to this ſupernatural gift beſides the quakers and methodiſts. Even divine grace ſeems not wholly efficient, for the reverend dean Swift tells us that grace and the devil are at a continual game of leap frog.

He that believes not ſhall be damned. Without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.—Faith is the gift of God, faith is of the operation of God. He worketh in us to will and to do, of his own good pleaſure. Thus after all, Chriſtians unite in giving their ſuffrage to and moſt cordial approbation of the inexpugnable old philoſophical axiom, viz. That men can neither *be* or *do* otherwiſe than he who made them intended they ſhould *be* and *do*.

The other is as eternal a truth, That our knowledge of God is total darkneſs. That we neither do, or can

know

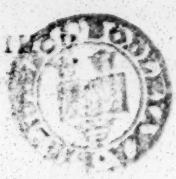
know any thing at all about him. See this diſplayed in the abſurdity of Chriſtian doctrine. They declare that God is a being of *pure benevolence*. A fundamental doctrine of the Chriſtian religion is,—That all the human race, men, women and children ſhall be one day called out of their graves for no other purpoſe (excepting a very few) than to ſuffer the moſt excruciating torments, without mitigation and without end.

I am, my Lord,

your's ſincerely,

T. M.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 16, l. 4, read temerity.—P. 23, l. 8, read epuipped.—P. 25, l. 4, read mercantile.—P. 29, l. 5, read abſence.—P. 114, l. 5, read beings.—P. 116, l. 7, read he.—P. 118, l. 2, read unwearied.—P. 130, l. 9, read reſtrictive.—P. 165, l. 1, read baſis.—P. 249, l. 1, read the.